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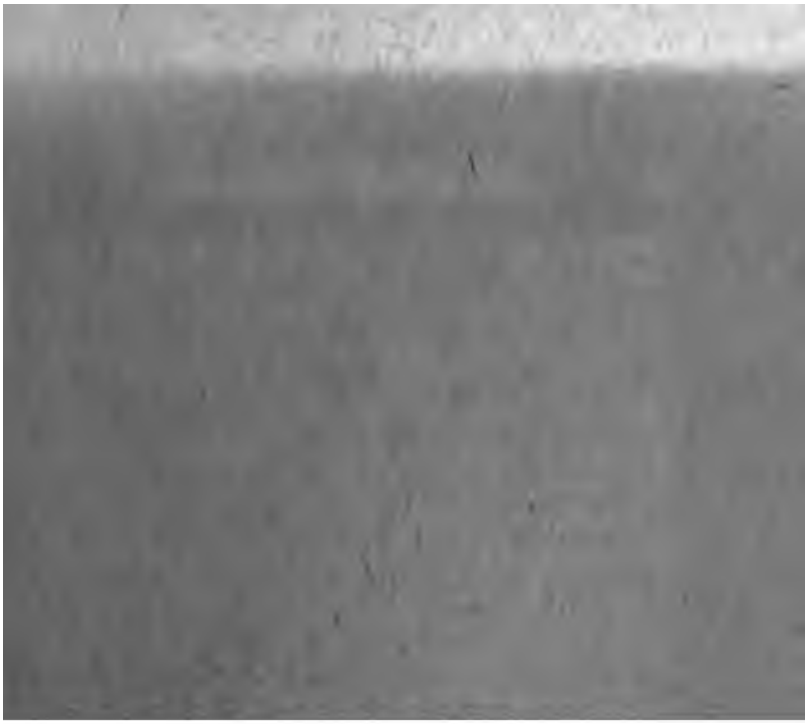

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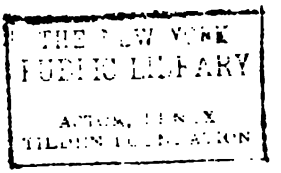
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Lieutenant Sandy Ray.

—*Frontispiece*

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Lieutenant Sandy Ray

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The Story of Sandy Ray

NEW YORK.

LIEUTENANT SANDY RAY

CHAPTER I.

The latest arrival at the post stood by the broad open doorway, within sound of the thunder—almost within touch of the salt spray—of the long rollers that broke in white, hissing foam upon the gleaming sands. The red gold disk of the setting sun had just vanished below the westward sea. The smoke of the evening gun was still drifting slowly up the leafy heights bordering the cantonment on the east. Out on the broad level of the parade the battalion stood motionless at attention as the beautiful flag, to the crashing accompaniment of "The Star Spangled Banner," sank slowly beneath the cross trees. Fringing the quadrangle on three sides long ranks of dusky heads were bared in silent homage, the men as a rule dressed in *ropas* of spotless white, the women in skirts of livelier hue. Here and there the black cassock of a padre or the dun-colored frocks of a brace of shaven friars broke the lane of brighter color. Half way out across the open space, clad like his command in "khaki" with campaign hat and leggings to match,

stood the commanding officer, a soldierly, statuesque personage, whose arms and hands close-held and extended—so differed from the unconstrained American pose—betokened an earlier training in some rigid European school. Facing him, a double line of dust-hued forms, four well-drilled and disciplined companies of infantry awaited the last note of the national air and the command to open ranks. Back of them, some sixty yards away, gable ends toward the parade, the nipa roofs of the new barracks stood sharply against the dull green of the heights. To the right of the fine large band, whose membership had been surreptitiously strengthened by volunteer native musicians, the tall white flagstaff, a recent acquisition from Hong Kong of which the commanding officer was inordinately proud, pointed straight to the zenith and looked down benignantly upon mundane affairs. On the hither side of the quadrangle in front of post headquarters, though the veranda was occupied only by a few enlisted clerks and three or four convalescents, the bordering throng had left a wide open space, Latin rule having taught the pliant native quite as much in good manners as it had in bad morals,—the Filipino, be it noted, having learned from his Andalusian master what he never would have heard of from his American mentor, such customs as uncovering and standing attention when answering or accosting a sentry, and never presuming to interpose between the office and the parade. In point of de-

portment, therefore, and in those innumerable little courtesies by which the well-bred human, whether white, black or brown, endeavors to show consideration for fellow men, it was a matter of frequent remark at Camp Boutelle that the native to the manner born, stood as far above his American reformer as, in all other respects according to the same authority, he stood below.

In point of fact this very matter of good manners had been the source of discussion, injudiciously heated in view of the local temperature, at tiffin that very day. The mess to a man was resentful of certain innovations "sprung" by the new presiding officer thereof, now temporarily in command of the entire post, for every officer of field rank was gone. Only three days earlier a colonel presided over the ceremony of retreat parade, but by the same steamer that landed Lieutenant Ray in their midst, this high official had been borne away to Manila. Three days earlier a squadron of cavalry, dismounted, had lined up with the infantry at parade, but that same steamer had brought confirmation of a telegraphic order that sent the squadron twisting through long miles of bamboo brake at the foot of the range, then diving abruptly into a darkened pass, and so out into an almost unknown, unexplored tract of mountainous, forest-covered country that stretched away in lonely grandeur toward the farther and far-spreading Pacific.

As matters stood, a captain of Foot now commanded at Camp Boutelle and a much perturbed adjutant of cavalry was his prophet. Of the officers stationed at this somewhat isolated post as many as seven were blessed with the presence of their families from the States, and of these families, at the moment of the arrival of Mr. Sandford Ray, recently transferred from the squadron adjutancy at Malinta to the command of an orphaned troop at regimental headquarters, no less than three were now to worry along the best they could without the husband and father, for Uncle Sam had need of his services on an extended scout toward the more distant sea. When Mr. Ray on reporting had expressed a wish to set forth and overtake his troop, the smilingly urbane officer left in command replied with much appreciation, "Most natural and highly creditable, Mr. Ray, but—aw—equally impossible. The trail is beset with *ladrones* and you could not possibly get through. For ten days at least you'll have to stay here. We'll be delighted to welcome you at mess, and we dine—aw—right after retreat parade—aw—*costume de riguer.*"

"What the mischief does this portend?" asked Mr. Ray of himself, in lieu of any other confidant. He had served some years before, and had been shot in sharp action—in the Philippines. He had been quite at home in Cavite and Batangas and the old regiment. He had a few friends, and his father, himself a colonel of cavalry serving in another department, had

many, in this to which his old comrade, Colonel Blake, had been assigned on promotion. But to every officer on duty with the battalion of the Forty-Second Infantry at this out-of-the-way cantonment the lieutenant was personally a stranger. Of him they had heard a good deal and were disposed to like him. Of them, oddly enough, he had heard very little. He had looked for a welcome from his father's stanch comrades, the colonel and the major of the Cavalry, also from some of the troop officers with whom he himself had served, but the colonel had been called to preside over an important military trial, and the major and the squadron sent to the field. It had not occurred to Mr. Ray to acquire advanced knowledge as to the infantry. He had counted on being presented by comrades of his own cloth.

It is always best for a new-comer to know something of the commissioned personnel, likewise of the households thereof, lest otherwise he start with a possibly wrong set and be some time finding his mistake, in which event he will be still longer getting over the effects. The first man to greet him was this Captain Crabtree, left temporarily in command; the next one was Captain Fethers, the regimental adjutant, and the third was Lieutenant Blunt, of the 42nd, a Western bred subaltern, who had won distinction as captain in a famous regiment of state volunteers, one of the veterans of the original army of occupation. Blunt being a bachelor, took the new-comer straight

to his quarters and there developed the fact that his name was eminently descriptive.

"Lieutenant," said he, "this is the best I have got, and it's all at your service. You have been in the Islands before and know their limitations. Make yourself at home until you can fit up your own shack, or longer if you like. I'll send for your plunder. Hilarious, here, will give you a tub, and your troubles needn't begin until—dinner time."

"Why then?" asked Mr. Ray, with a grin, as the native boy—Hilario as known in the mother church, Hilarious to his employer—deftly relieved him of his hand luggage and sun helmet.

"Because we've got a blooming Britisher for the first time in his life in command. He's boiling over with fool notions, and I'm damned if he isn't going to make us wear mess jackets and starched shirt fronts and patent leathers to dinner. Fact! Why, he's got out a code of rules and regulations governing our doings at mess, having them engrossed and framed, to be hung up on the porch, an' expects every man to memorize 'em. You've come just in time to join the cabal."

"Cabal?" asked Mr. Ray, vaguely, as he sipped gratefully at the glass of sizzling soda—he had declined the "peg"—handed him by Blunt.

"Cabal, yes! You don't suppose we are going to put up with any such infernal rot as this. Major Forrest, of your regiment, has been head of the mess

since he got here—perfect gentleman, by gad, and he never thought of such a thing. We wore white or khaki as we pleased, and were happy. Now comes this voluminous ass with a lot of British ware—well, you just read those rules."

And Sandy Ray had been reading them, he couldn't well avoid it, for with a low bow a Filipino mess boy, in immaculate blouse and pompadour front, had presented, framed and glazed a remarkably well engrossed pronunciamento that had arrayed the entire mess against the distinguished officer but recently advanced to the Chair. "With the compliments of the commanding officer, Señor," said the servant, and mutely Mr. Ray held forth his hand. "You wish me to read?" he asked.

"With the compliments of the commanding officer," parroted the attendant, with another bow, and Sandy read as required:

"The attention of officers, members of the mess, is called to the following regulations:

"Breakfast and tiffin being entirely informal, will be served from 6:30 to 8:30 a. m. and 12 to 1:30, respectively, and may be partaken of individually, each officer selecting the hour most convenient. In the matter of dress officers will wear that prescribed for the day's duty. Dinner, however, is a social yet semi-official function at which only full dress or dinner dress may be worn. In extremely hot weather on the order of the commanding officer a special signal following the sound of mess call will indicate that white uniforms may be worn, in which event no other dress will be permitted. Mess call will sound five minutes after the close of evening parade, and officers will

don the required dress as quickly as possible. Officers will take seats on intimation from the senior who will preside, and as this is the social hour of the day and the purpose of the mess is the mingling of gentlemen and the promotion of cordiality and comradeship, no officer will leave the table until after coffee has been served. The signal to rise will be given by the presiding officer.

"Political, personal and religious discussions are interdicted as being contrary to the spirit of the occasion, and officers will refrain from conversation that may possibly be misinterpreted while servants are in the room. Officers having guests will notify the caterer in advance, and, in order that proper attention may be shown them, will present them to the senior officer immediately upon his arrival."

Over this unusual document the young officer pondered a moment, a smile of amusement hovering about his lips. Then, without comment, he returned it to the waiting mess boy. It was the evening of his third day at Camp Boutelle and of his first appearance at dinner. Breakfast and luncheon he had thrice partaken of, but Mrs. Blake, the charming wife of his regimental commander, and a friend of many years, had insisted on his dining with her and a few chosen ones the first evening, and Chaplain and Mrs. Stanhope, other old friends, had drag-netted him to dinner the second. On both occasions Captain Crabtree, the temporary post commander, had been present and very much in evidence, and his voice in anecdote, reminiscence or prophecy was ever dominant. It had pleased the captain to be very gracious to the young trooper. "Crab" well knew and admired the colonel,

his father, and was prompt to say how much the son resembled him. Now they were to meet at the mess dinner, and, as a possibly necessary preliminary, Lieutenant Ray had been handed and virtually requested to study the already famous and widely discussed document known thus far as "Crabby's Code."

A strange creature was this Crabtree, a fine soldier, brave, enthusiastic, energetic, but oddly unlike his comrades. English he was to the backbone, and very valuable in his two years' apprenticeship as a sergeant and the long subaltern service that followed. He had evidently been thoroughly drilled in the past, for his "set up" was the best in the regiment; but concerning that past he could never be induced to freely talk. Direct questioning annoyed him; cross-questioning he shunned and the questioners he snubbed. The rank and file opined that he was a deserter from His Majesty's forces. Certain it was that he had shown no "time expired" or other papers. On presenting himself at the recruiting office in New York, somewhere late in the seventies, he gave his birthplace as Huddersfield, Yorkshire, his age as twenty-three and his occupation as clerk. He declared he had neither wife nor child, and agreed to accept such bounty, pay and rations as Uncle Sam might tender him, signed the papers and stepped into the recruit squad at "the Island" a better drilled man than the corporal told off to teach him his facings. In less than a year he in turn was drilling recruits. In

less than two years he had his sergeant's bars, an
'82 had won his way to the commission of a se
lieutenant. From this time on Crabtree moved st
ily forward in the service of his adopted cou
without ever having severed civic relations with
of his birth. He was clean built, clean shaven, c
spoken, a good boxer, swimmer and all-round ath
but he was close. "Crab," as his comrades called
for short, neither borrowed nor, at first, lent.
never talked of his own affairs nor did he meddle
those of others. Crab scraped and saved until he
known to have more money, and spend less, than
subaltern in the regiment. '98 saw him gazette
his captaincy, and five years later he was comman
a battalion as senior of his grade at the post.

And all these years, though an admirer of the
he had never married, nor to the knowledge of
man or woman in the 42nd, had he even shown sy
toms of entanglement. He devoted himself ass
ously and successively to just one woman—the
of the commanding officer, whenever that di
guished dame happened to be with the regiment.
showed almost abject deference to just one man—
commanding officer himself.

To all others Crab was civil, kindly or indiffe
accordingly to the extent of his liking, but the
or regimental commander, whether Crab liked hi
not, was the object of his unlimited adulation.
alty itself could have asked no more at his ha

Crab never presumed to come within six paces of the post commander unless specifically urged. Crab never presumed to sit, or even to stand except at attention, in the presence of the post commander. Crab set him apparently upon a pedestal of exclusiveness and dignity that none else might venture to approach. Crab laughed at his commander's eldest jokes with rejoicing new born at each repetition. Crab rebuked the faintest levity, otherwise inspired, in presence of that official, and Crab would look volumes of reproach at brother officers who spoke in criticism of their common superior. It was patent to all that to Crab's mind the divinity that doth hedge a king was the mantle that should cloak the post commander, all of which was somewhat repugnant to the American idea. It was more than repugnant when Crab himself, by some strange freak of soldier fortune, stepped while still a captain into temporary command of a fairly large and important post, for within the compass of a single day he contrived to make it known that just such deference as it was his custom to show to his commander, that deference he expected to be shown to himself.

It was Ray's consummate good luck, said envious comrades in the Malinta squadron, to be offered the command of that troop at regimental headquarters. It was Ray's consummate ill luck, said Blunt, who knew something of his previous history, that he should be sent to Camp Boutelle just at this particular

time. Blake, colonel commanding, was gone for
fortnight at least and possibly longer. Forrest, majo
commanding the squadron, was gone in all probabilit
for as long a time. Fethers, the cavalry adjutan
with his precious regimental band, was here to k
sure, and not too happy were the bandsmen at havir
to play for the ceremonies of an alien commanc
Stanhope, the chaplain, and his amiable consort wer
still at the post, and best of all, Colonel Blake's wi
and winsome wife was there to befriend Mr. Ray i
as had been many a time the case in the past, th
young officer tumbled into trouble. But while all pr
dicted that it couldn't be long, under such rule an
conditions as Crabtree had started, before troub
came, no one of their number began to predict or i
deed to imagine the source from which trouble w
destined to come, as come it speedily did, again
Lieutenant Sanford Ray.

CHAPTER II.

It was the late autumn of the year of our Lord the nineteen hundred and third and of the new uniform the first. The 42nd Infantry being stationed in the States long months after the issue of G. O. No. 132 on the fateful 31st of December, had found itself compelled, so far as its officers were concerned, to purchase much of the new outfit—that much of it, too, which could hardly be worn in the tropics. The 42nd had been at a big eastern garrison, a fine and showy regiment much in requisition for parades, expositions and monument unveilings and monumental sham battles. It had to get the new full uniform, even though it could get nothing for the old. An optimistic inspector had said, in reply to the rueful question of certain subalterns who had not yet succeeded in paying for the overcoat and the double-breasted frock, the handsome, costly belt, sword, shoulder-knots and helmet purchased but six months earlier, "Sell 'em to some of these National Guardsmen. They are always glad to get 'em at a sacrifice." But the inspector knew not the National Guard, who had no use whatever for uniforms or equipments no longer to be those of the regular service. Lieuten-

ants Walker, Trott and Hikeman, now of the 42nd, had not worn their eighty dollar overcoats six times apiece, nor their fine full dress six times six, when they were ordered to provide themselves with an entirely new, much more extensive and far more expensive wardrobe. "I'll have six suits of uniform and as many at law," said one luckless youngster. "Oh, why did I ever go for a soldier?" The officers of the 42nd got the new full dress in the spring, "the route" for Manila in the summer and the bills by almost every post between times and after. The battalion ordered to take station at Camp Boutelle arrived in khaki—and September. From that time until the date of Mr. Ray's appearance in November, not once had either full dress or dress uniform been worn. On the principle of "in for a penny, in for a pound," some few young swells had gone so far as to order the evening dress coat or the mess jacket provided for in the general order, and Crabtree, who was forever drawing odious and invidious comparisons between the mess system of the English army and that of our own, was known to possess both. Even though the summer white uniform was cool, good to look at and most becoming, Crabtree preferred to make his appearance after retreat in the social "spike-tail" with military embellishments. And having ascertained that no fewer than three of the mess were possessors of the jackets, what had Crabtree done but

issue mandate that the jacket should be worn at dinner!

Boutelle was far from the beaten track. A little, two-company post at the start, it snuggled close to the beach, between the mountains and the China sea. Then came a season of pernicious activity among the natives in the interior. Cavalry were sent to the field, and, finding it impossible to penetrate the dense bamboo, were remanded to the post. More infantry came and saw and conquered, temporarily at least, but the officials who studied the situation decided to enlarge the garrison even if they could not expand the limits. The site was fine and healthful, for Luzon. The spring water was good, the sea water was sparkling, and when the quarters became crowded, why, what more simple than to send forth the garrison, half at a time, and let them scout for a living. It was good exercise, and fun for the natives. The bamboo trails had been worn broad enough for bridle paths by this time and the cavalry could travel in column of files if it couldn't do anything else. So a busy time had the boys at Boutelle and no one much the worse for it until Blake, the colonel, was called to Manila; Forrest, the major, was sent to the mountains, and Crabtree, the captain commanding the Forty-Second's Second Battalion, became at one fell swoop and for the first time in his life head both of a mess and a post. It was a head turned from the start.

Now Sandy Ray, as has been said, was serving his

second tour in the Islands and had completed almost a year of the allotted two. He and his fellows of the cavalry had availed themselves of that portion of the order which permitted officers on duty in Alaska or the Philippines to wait until their return to the States before fitting themselves out with the new bill of dress, but Sandy had had a chance to run over to Hong Kong during the spring, and the mess jacket being an item of attire borrowed obviously from the British service, he let an English army tailor try his hand at the job, and very natty and equally un-American was the resultant garment. Colonel Ray, his father, with the conservatism of the "Old Army," had looked upon it, when reluctantly produced for family inspection in Manila, with whimsical disfavor and referred to it not as a mess, but as a monkey jacket. Navy officers, however, who knew the world and saw with broadened visions, pronounced it eminently correct—just what the officers wore at Malta, "Gib" and the score of other army stations that girdles the globe with the colors of Great Britain. But in his own regiment Sandy had not yet ventured to wear it. As a matter of fact, however, it may be asserted here and now that Lieutenant Ray felt none of the rancor expressed by Messrs. Blunt, Trott and Hikeman over Captain Crabtree's order. The Pittsburg had dropped anchor in the bay, and two of her officers, calling upon the post commander, had been bidden to dinner. Sandy could see their boat even now cleaving the blue

billows long distance out from shore, and the young officer was more than half disposed to say that Crabby's head was entirely level, as he glanced down over his immaculate attire. Snowy trousers and waistcoat, with patent leather ankle boots and box spurs of silver, made very "swagger" accompaniment to the gold laced jacket. Crab knew what was what, said the lone cavalryman, as he watched the tall commander stalking swift to his bungalow, the juniors sulkily scattering after him to effect the demanded change. They looked very fit and soldierly in the trim, well-"laundered" khaki. "But, bless my soul," said Crab, "you wouldn't have a gentleman sit down to eat in fighting kit, would you?" and so the fiat had gone forth.

And presently, with the benedicks and their better halves and olive branches poking fun at them from the verandas, the bachelors sheepishly and sulkily appeared, three of them at least, attired almost as was Mr. Ray, the others, cursing their luck if not their commander, in the double-breasted blue frock, with stiff standing collar and glistening shoulder-knots, buttoned snugly to the throat, and this with the mercury standing at eighty-eight in spite of the blessed sea breeze. When asked should they also wear belt and side arms, Captain Crabtree austerely said, no. Only one regiment in His Majesty's army so appeared, but that was tradition. Its officers had once been massacred, while sitting at mess, through

the treachery of the Sepoy servants, and their successors went side-armed to dinner from that time forth. When they, these Boutelle bachelors, were assembled on the veranda of the mess house and saw the navy men being escorted from Crab's bungalow, they said further opprobrious things because they wished the function over and done with, and felt certain there would be exasperating delays. In no hospitable mood were they, Blunt especially bordering on the mutinous in his condemnation of the entire proceeding, Ray alone maintaining an appearance of equanimity, and such were the climatic conditions under which began a very unpretentious dinner that was destined to become memorable in the annals of Camp Boutelle.

For something had happened to ruffle the commanding officer, and when Crabtree was cross, crabbed *and* commanding, all the world about him was sure to know it. Blunt was first to see it as the little party finally drew near, Crab and the cavalry adjutant, levied on for the occasion, escorting the two gentlemen from the Pittsburg's wardroom, and a stiff orderly following at discreet distance in their wake. "Watch out, fellows," muttered the discoverer, "something's gone crooked with Crab and Crab is in a pet. Don't anybody open his head until he has to."

"It's only that Mrs. Shane has been guying him again," said Walker. "I heard her say she had a

rod in pickle for him, and—didn't she stop at his quarters a moment ago?"

Mrs. Shane was Crabby's social Nemesis and no more afraid of him, even when commanding officer, than she was of her husband at any time. Mrs. Shane had more friends than Crabby, for she was a woman to win and hold them. But she couldn't bear Crabtree, as she frankly admitted, and curiously enough, was constantly seeking his society. She loved to prod and provoke him, and she could do both. He had early incurred the ill will of many a woman in his former regiment, and it followed him to the new, by the announcement that he was not a "marrying man." He would be no woman's slave. It wasn't that any woman at Boutelle wanted Crab for a husband. It was because many a woman at Boutelle wished to wed him to some impecunious niece or sister, and Mrs. Shane knew of several. Moreover, Mrs. Shane was a stranger to the ways of the old army, she having entered the service, so to speak, as a consequence of the Spanish War. Previous to that episode in our history Mrs. Shane had spent her days in the comparative seclusion of a western manufacturing town, had married a smart young university graduate with martial tendencies that had made him one of the best officers in the university battalion, and later captain of the local company of the State militia, with which rank and command he went to the Philippines on one of the first expeditions in '98, had made a record that

won him a captaincy in the national volunteers, and later a commission in the Forty-Second regulars. Mrs. Shane, having long led the church choir and the Woman's Guild at home; having dominated both pastor and flock, and displayed quite as many qualities of command as had her gallant husband, knew nothing of "the divinity" previously referred to, that doth hedge a king or a commanding officer. She treated every man from corporal up to colonel with the same frank, off-hand, independent friendliness so long as she liked him. Crabtree she had disliked from the start and never had to tell him so. He could have forgiven it in her the more readily had she shown it in some other way, but Mrs. Shane laughed at him, and that was unbearable.

There were but half a dozen families among the officers' quarters at Camp Boutelle the autumn of 1904, and Crabtree could have wished the number still further reduced, and at the expense of the 42nd. A story was often told concerning his initiation in American military life that was a source of rare vexation to him, and that he had long since said no gentleman would repeat or refer to in his presence—and no friend at any time. He had scientifically pummeled more than one fellow soldier in his day for even hinting at it, and was quite ready to do as much for a brother officer. A combination of Irish recruiting sergeant and English family pride had led to the

trouble. When asked his Christian name the would-be recruit had truthfully answered "Almeric."

"Al what?" bellowed the sergeant.

"Meric," coolly answered the Briton.

"Al Merrick, is it? Well, young man, we've no use for names split that way in the army. What's the Al stand for, Albert, Alfred?—Naythur? Well, it *does* then from this time, d'ye hear?" And the Briton, who had really been named for a member of a very distinguished military family, found himself enrolled in the Army of the United States as Albert M. Crabtree until after his promotion to the grade of second lieutenant, when by special edict it was changed and he was rechristened and commissioned "Almeric P.," and mightily did his comrades wonder what the P stood for, and Crab refused to tell. Now, Mrs. Shane had stumbled on this story shortly after her joining the Forty-Second and from that day forth life had new zest for Crabby. It was remembered that shortly before the navy men were seen sauntering in past the sentry post at the beach entrance, Mrs. Shane, coming suddenly out of the doctor's doorway adjoining Crab's quarters, had caught sight of the temporary post commander just within the bamboo lattice of his own portal. As ill luck would have it, he had just come for a peep toward the beach in search of his guests, and the expanse of white shirt front and glittering shoulder-knots, lace and buttons had instantly caught her eye. The doc-

tor's laughing wife had partially, at least, heard, and Lieutenant Walker had observed the action of the ensuing colloquy, for it was one-sided at best and abruptly ended. At a mere chance verbal shot on part of his fair tormentor, Crab had started violently, turned his back and quit the doorway, leaving Mrs. Shane, with rather a scared look on her bonny face, to scurry away home and husbandward, where, as was subsequently heard, she told her own particular soldier what had happened. By this time the navy men had reached the captain's bungalow and they and the sight of mess jackets along the hard-pounded shell walk put all other thoughts out of most people's heads.

Never before had Captain Crabtree been known to drink so much as to tangle his tongue or ideas, but this night, as was remembered long at Camp Boutelle, he came flushed and flustered to the mess, made a perceptible "break" in presenting his junior officers to these polished and traveled guests from the sister service, and, not content with the sound and palatable claret the caterer had directed served until dessert, ordered the Filipino steward to bring in champagne before soup was fairly out of the way, then began drinking and toasting right and left. There were men present who would drink only in moderation at any time. There was one who would not drink at all. Lieutenant Ray had turned down his glass the moment the bottle began the round, and

before dinner was half over Crabtree was reproaching his fellows for not filling up and doing honor to the occasion. He had seated Lieutenant Commander Ballaine at his right and Lieutenant Garrett at his left, placing Captain Fethers next beyond the senior of the navy men and Blunt next the junior, and every little while, with much effort at jocularity, he would rally the young trooper just beyond them on his unprofessional abstinence. "Never heard of such a thing in the cavalry, Ray, me boy," said he; "never," then haplessly added, "and your father's son, too?" whereat Ray's pale and embarrassed face went suddenly red, and the adjutant shot warning glances at his misguided commander. That Crab should monopolize the talk was nothing new, but this night, only in mutterings to one another, were the juniors heard at all, Crab's high-pitched voice dominated all other sounds and every subject.

Dinner had been somewhat delayed to begin with, for Crabtree kept his guests at his quarters from ten to fifteen minutes before escorting them over. With mistaken hospitality he had prescribed cocktails, which his guests politely sipped but privately shunned, and had himself partaken of two. Then, despite the fact that eight brother officers were dawdling on the mess veranda and some of them damning the delay, nothing would do but a detour round by Colonel Blake's quarters that he might present the distinguished visitors to the charming wife

of the absent commander. Mrs. Blake, seated with her friend, Mrs. Stanhope, on her own piazza fronting the now moonlit sea, had greeted them with smiling grace, and Mrs. Stanhope, who scented bitters, spirits and irreverence about the temporary head of affairs, with a reserve indicative of clerical disapprobation. Mess call had sounded at the proper time, concluding with the signal "full dress," and every member had responded but the senior. Then, twenty minutes later the visitors stood about the colonel's doorway, Crab, as usual, doing all the talking, and just at this moment the adjutant was startled to hear, loud and spirited, the same call repeated, and then, aghast and dismayed, to hear it followed up with imperative emphasis by "double time." Crab was so engrossed in his own eloquence he neither marked nor heard, but all the rest of Camp Boutelle was aware of it within the next half hour and knew just how and why that call was sounded, and knew, though it couldn't swear, just who sounded it. As no man could take his seat or leave it before the commanding officer, that bedeviled banquet was bidding fair to last until midnight, when startling interruption came,

CHAPTER III.

MENTION has been made of the activity of the ladrones in Luzon, and of native banditti elsewhere. Colonel Ray, with a mixed command of horse and foot, scouts and machine guns, was having a brisk campaign against the really formidable array of fanatical savages in a far southern province. Colonel Blake had been sending out an occasional detachment here in northern Luzon, where, however, matters seemed fairly quiet. Cavite province, southwest of the capital city, yet only a few hours away, was alive with nimble foemen, who impartially robbed everybody, but killed, when they could help it, only whites. But now matters had begun to look squally along the line of communication 'twixt Boutelle and Dagupan, the northward end of the railway. Up to the morning of the Pittsburg's appearance in the offing, the very day of Crab's initial dinner, the telegraph line had been unmolested, the main road undisturbed, but demonstrations had occurred that convinced the general commanding that there was disaffection among certain ex-officers of the Aguinaldo army and that they were stirring up mischief in a new direction. It was no chance shot, this coming of the saucy gunboat

with her load of saucier jackies. The admiral had an ear for indications and an eye on the coast line, and it was by his order that the Pittsburg slipped in past Point Conception with the early dawn and the captain's gig was called away soon after colors.

For forty hours not a soul had come up from the south, and Crab knew nothing positive in that direction. Moreover, he was oddly constituted, as are often others, and firm in the faith that nothing could go wrong about his bailiwick without his knowing it. With all suavity and civility he had received the information given him by Ballaine. Airily he dictated a despatch or two that the navy men might see his wires were untouched. Lazily he directed Captain Fethers to send forth a few native scouts, with instructions to ascertain the truth of the rumors mentioned; then elaborately he insisted on showing the visitors over the post, which they did not at all care to see, and immediately upon their return to the ship, donned his dress uniform and with his adjutant and orderly, was rowed out to the anchorage, and for the first time in his life (may he live to hear the guns in his honor!) returned, as commanding officer, the ceremonious call of the captain of a man-of-war. Crab was in a glow of glory and delight throughout that livelong day. If he had a regret of any kind before parade it was that he had forgotten to ask his navy visitors to come in time to see the fine exhibition of his well-drilled battalion. If he had any peace after

it, the fault lay not at the door of either Mrs. Shane or the mess, for both had found means, one by accident, the other with malice prepense, to deal him much annoy. But this was not all. Even while airily receiving the "latest intelligence" of insurgent movements as known in Manila, and affecting to be in possession of later and more accurate information, Crabtree had warned his sergeant major and clerk to stand by the office and watch that wire. The signal men had orders not to quit their station, one operator being constantly at the instrument. Ballaine had told him that only two days earlier the commanding general had wired the admiral he was almost disposed to revoke the orders calling Colonel Blake to Manila and sending Major Forrest to the field. The general should see, said Crab to himself, that in the person of the present post commander he had an official every whit as energetic and brilliant as the seniors sent away, and if there happened to be a robber band within a dozen miles of Camp Boutelle, to Boutelle and its temporary commander should go all the credit of that band's capture or annihilation. Then came the chance shot from the smiling lips of Mrs. Shane; then followed a story, told in few words by the best *raconteur* in the mess, that Crab was fain to laugh at, at the moment, though it enraged his secret soul, and then came, at half past ten, and at the climax of a long-winded yarn Crab was distressed to leave unfin-

ished, the startling announcement from the office: "Line's down, sir, and San Sulpicio all afire!"

Barely nine miles around the deep, concave curve of the bay on the southward road to Dagupan, lay the teaming little town the natives only knew as Balingbang till the padres and the friars built the big new church and monastery, the sisters came and opened school for native children, and both demanded that the church should christen every Filipino soul and rechristen their earthly abiding place. A little river came gushing from the mountains back of town and flowed swiftly through its bamboo fringes to the sea. Bancas by the dozen bore daily tribute of the kindly fruits of the earth to Balingbang's landing steps, where many a casco unloaded wares brought by Chinese vessels from the westward sea, and Chinese by the score, Tagalogs and Ilocanos by the hundred swarmed in the surrounding barrios. It was the center of population, and the obvious site for such a church and school. But little Camp Boutelle, when first named, had been pitched nearly half way round the bend of the beautiful bay, nor with added years, importance and soldier population had it been removed. San Sulpicio was no place for soldiers; all officers agreed as to that, for there was manufactured a liquor of comprehensive vileness that rivaled Rip Van Winkle's sleeping potion in its deadening effect. There had been differences between the civil authorities of Sulpicio and their military kindred at the

camp. There had even been bad blood, for smuggling had been carried on at Sulpicio and charged by Sulpicio's "deputy collector" and others of the civil law, directly to the military at the fort. Colonel Blake despised the deputy and all his works, and between Sulpicio and Boutelle had sprung up a curious feud that had even led to bloodletting among the partisans of both. But as the mess came scampering forth into the night, the white fronts and trousers glistening in the moonbeams, all this was forgotten. The navy officers hurriedly gathered up their caps and sped to their waiting boat. The assembly rang through the still watches of the night, and the men came tumbling from their bunks and hard breathing into ranks, armed for instant battle. Nine miles of muddy road might bear them to the scene of action, but not until the town was practically wiped out. "Wig wag to the Pittsburg!" shouted Crab. "Ask if they can take fifty men and land them there," and the signal torch was swinging on the beach before the captain could reach the bristling side, yet not before the ready craft was under way. Even before the alarm sounded at Boutelle the watch had seen and reported the blaze. The "Deck" had divined the cause, and all hands were turning up from below, while at quarter speed the Pittsburg headed cautiously shoreward to pick up her commander, and Crab's signal message was read to him even as the sharp prow swept round to the south and "Full speed ahead!" clanged through

the engine room. "Sorry—can't possibly wait; 'twould take half an hour to fetch 'em from shore," answered Ballaine. "Let her go for all there's in her, Mr. Fox," and dove below for his fighting kit before the "Aye, aye, sir" ended. Then with a big white bone in her teeth, like a terrier of the sea, the swift gunboat sped on her way, cleaving the deep blue bosom of the moonlit waters, her wake a whirling surge of hissing, snow white foam.

Oh, what a night was that at Boutelle! Everybody up and many away, for, with the band, the convalescents, the dismounted troopers left behind from the squadron, and a raft of extra duty men to guard the post—even the chaplain porting a "Krag" and many a woman gripping a "Colt"—Crabtree had weeded out his limp and ineffectives, placed Fethers in command of the post and Ray of the home-kept cavalry, then with every officer and serviceable man had set forth by way of the beach, his troubles forgotten, his vinous exhilaration banished almost at the instant. The long rainy season had left the road in many places a quagmire through which only the carabaos could wallow. The river split a way through two channels to the sea and the tide was high, holding the swift "hiking" column to the softer sand at top of the beach, and making it harder marching. But, afoot like his fellows, Crab strode at their head, only a handful of men, advance guard and left flankers, between him and the foe. To the far front could

be seen the dulling glow of the flames that had sent such volumes of black smoke to the skies, and, on the dim, star-twinkling horizon beyond the low sandspit at the mouth of the stream, visible only through the night glasses of the signal men, the ghostly gray dot of the Pittsburg lay at the sharp apex of a long pencil of soot cloud. What on earth had happened to Sulpicio?

The camp knew before the battalion—knew that the raiders were scattered into the mountains ere ever the head of the panting column pushed, paddled or swam its way through the northernmost estuary and drew up, soaked with brine along the second. Without plugging even a shot from her long six-pounders, the Pittsburg had seen to that. But two blocks of a populous town had gone up in smoke, in sight of wailing women and children, while three would-be defenders, Americans in the civil service and the one school, lay slashed and boloed amid the ruins. Two other officials with their families, leaving almost everything behind them, had slipped away at the first alarm, and in their light boats had pushed far out on the bay, whither they would surely have been pursued by the vengeful band but for the salutary appearance of that swift-speeding war dog, showing all her teeth in the slant of the moonbeams. The raiders bore with them in their retirement certain fellow countrymen accused of giving warning, to be dealt with later. Only half accomplished was the object of the leaders,

thanks to that unlooked for bit of marine architecture. They knew just how long it would take the troops to get there and how much could be done in the meantime, but they had not prepared for a rescue from the sea. It was the gunboat, steaming slowly back soon after daybreak, that exchanged signals with the battalion on the beach, but landed the fugitives and full particulars at Boutelle. Two weeks earlier the acting deputy collector, on duty at Sulpicio, had been writing virulent lies about Colonel Blake and his command to a certain bureau of the Governor General's office at Manila. Now, as luck would have it, he, his wife and daughter were being housed, sheltered, fed, comforted and ministered to in the only set of quarters big enough for the purpose in all the post, those of the absent commander who by this time was probably facing calumnies at headquarters, while his devoted wife was doing her best to succor the calumniator here at their army home.

And sorely was succor needed. Amos Dean had been a man of mark in his own State, a vehement, vigorous leader in politics and a virulent hater in any line. Wealth and power had been his. Speculation had scattered his money, a quarrel had broken his power, and friends were glad to get him out of the way—and a berth under the new civil service in the Philippines. Before he had been a month at Manila his chief found him far too aggressive and far reaching. Opium smuggling, it was said, was being briskly

conducted both along the shores of Lingayan and San Sulpicio, and they sent Dean up there to put a stop to it. "Give him rope enough and he'll hang himself," had been whispered in the ear of his chief, and Dean's energy had been phenomenal, likewise his success. He smote the shore confederates with powerful hand, banishing them to the mountains and spoiling their trade, but, curiously, not the traffic. What Manila first failed to grasp was how it should happen that Dean had broken up every smuggler's den along the Ilocos line, and yet opium kept coming in from the north. The dealers had abundance and the customs no returns. Then came light and secret investigation. Then came Dean's startling allegations at the expense of the garrison at Boutelle. Then came vengeance, swift, sudden and unlooked for. Even while, in due process of law, the authorities were proceeding to enmesh him, the lawless crew whom he had robbed joined forces with the Ladrones and swooped upon him and his own. Harry Dean, his only son, stood and fought to cover the retreat of the mother and sister he loved and the father whom he more than half suspected, and "nobly fighting," fell. Mrs. Dean, prostrate with dread and fear, was lifted aboard the gunboat and later lowered over the side to the waiting cutter, and with her beloved child kneeling by the wailing mother as the silent crew bent to the oars, she was borne across the bounding waters and met at the strand by the ambulance and by Mrs. Blake, who

took the trembling girl to her heart and the unhs
Deans to her home, Sandy Ray assisting in the tr
fer as best he might. That was his first meeting
Gertrude Dean.

CHAPTER IV.

From that night march the command of Captain Crabtree returned next day weary and disgusted, Crab himself being the crabbedest man in the party. The wires were not working, so he could not favor Manila with the army side of the story. The roads were barely passable even if unwatched by the foe, and he had yet to write his report and find means of sending it. He much wished that the Pittsburg would remain in the bay until he could send his version to Manila, but the Pittsburg would not. After putting the rescued refugees ashore at Boutelle, the jaunty craft went about, sped again to San Sulpicio, picked up the landing party that had cleaned out the last lingering ladrone during the night, and the last seen of her she was tearing through the billows far out at the point, heading southward with her tidings.

Had Blake or Forrest been at home neither, probably, could have accomplished much more than did Crabtree, but Crabtree meant to do so very much while blessed with the command, and now here, when there came a capital chance, he had accomplished nothing. Nor were his men in better mood. Salt surf bathing by moonlight when the air is soft and warm and the water soothing is all very well when

one is prepared for the process, but it is otherwise when one is panting and perspiring in marching garb and heavy shoes. Either in the surf or the sluggish Bingbong every mother's son had been immersed to the waist, and all for nothing. They reached the neighborhood of town only when the revels were long over and the rebels miles away. They did not get back to the post until after nine the following day, many of them footsore, many headsore and all hungry. Crab's mess jacket dinner was a thing of the past, but not so its consequence. Blunt had dared to tell a story that called for a show of teeth all round and the listeners, all save one, joined in jolly laughter. That one, with a muttered curse, made valorous attempt at a tolerant smile. "He'll square with you for that, Blunt," ruefully said Captain Prince. "Crab never forgives an indignity or a joke," and it looked as though Prince were right, for Blunt was barely out of tub and into dry clothing, when came the natty orderly with "the commanding officer's compliments and he desired to speak with the lieutenant at once." Ray, eager for details, was with Blunt at the moment and he, too, looked troubled. Blunt finished his dressing in sulky silence, then started for Crabtree's quarters, there to be told the Commandante had just stepped over to the office and had left word for the lieutenant to follow him. The post surgeon, at the moment, was coming homeward from the direction of the Blakes' big house and Ray ventured to inquire for

his patient. Mrs. Dean was calmer under sedatives and her daughter's soothing, said the medical man, "but Dean himself is in a bad way." The surgeon, too, was tired and disgusted, for he had gone with the "snipe column" ploughing eight miles through deep sand or salted seas all practically for nothing. The surgeon more than half thought Mr. Dean deserved all he had got, but professional considerations forbade his saying so. Dean's first demand, it seems, on getting aboard the Pittsburg was for whiskey, which, said the receiving officer, with becoming gravity, "only our doctor can supply." Dean's conduct at first had been considered heartless, but before the landing at Boutelle it was plain that Dean was a sick man, body and soul, and his son's gallant stand and heroic death had gravely complicated the condition. Dean was now apparently unconscious of his own whereabouts, in an upper room at Colonel Blake's, with two hospital corps men on watch. Nor had Dean been told of the prostration of his wife. "There is only one of them left with wit," said the doctor, "and that, despite her grief, is Gertrude. By the way, Mrs. Blake would like you to come over."

So Sandy went, thinking no longer of Blunt and his possible troubles and seeking only to be of service to Mrs. Blake. She had not seen Crabtree, to speak to, since the return of the command. She had heard from Fethers that Crab had squeezed a platoon into some bancas (dugout canoes) and ferried them over

the deeper of the two estuaries, and thus left an officer and some thirty men to guard Sulpicio's ruined walls. Ray did not envy the lieutenant that duty, for there was little left from all accounts to invite a second attack. He did not feel kindly toward Crabtree, whose clumsy remarks at Sandy's abstinence still rankled—not because of what Crab thought of that, but what he had dared to imply of Sandy's father. Ray had been inclined to rebuke Blunt for the story told at Crabtree's expense, but now he was not. "Crabtree deserved what he got," thought he, "and the mess sized him up exactly right."

A native servant met the lieutenant at the darkened doorway and showed him up to the cool, breezy, enclosed veranda, on the seaward side. Mrs. Blake was with the sick lady, said the mozo, and would be out in a moment. Would the Señor Teniente have tea or a lemonade? The Señor would not. He would wait with patience. Already, though the noonday call had not yet sounded, the striped curtains were fluttering in a life-giving breeze from the sea. The deep reclining chairs of bamboo were cool and inviting. In frames and easels, on the broad circular tables of native wood, were photographs of many a man and woman whom Sandy knew and honored—his own mother, his soldier father prominent among them. Ever since his earliest boyhood in Wyoming he had known the Blakes, often as next door neighbors, ever as their most intimate friends. "Uncle Gerald" and

"Aunt Nannie" he had been early taught to call them. "Unka Legs" he had once been soundly slippered for hailing the long, lean captain who had been for years his father's most cherished comrade, and who was consumed with wrath when told what had taken place —not that Master Sandy should have been mischievous and impertinent, but that Marion, his mother, should have spanked him for it. In all the army they had known no dearer friends, and Sandy's one objection to the promotion that carried him to the regiment of which Colonel Blake had so recently assumed command, was that "Fellows will be sure to say the colonel will favor me in every way and forgive every break, just on Dad's account." But when Sandy came his colonel was going, and now he was glad he came since Aunt Nan had need of him. But what could that need be?

Before Ray had been thirty-six hours at the post Blunt had told him something of the colonel's abomination of Amos Dean and a little of Amos Dean's most objectionable insinuations at the expense of Blake and his garrison. Blunt did not begin to know them all. Ray was prepared, therefore, to cold-shoulder the deputy in case he met him, and if the deputy demanded cause to tell him, flat-footed, why. But not for a moment had Ray been prepared for what he quickly saw in Dean's wife and daughter—that they were of gentle blood, refined and educated, which Amos Dean was not. Moreover in any social

circle they were obviously Dean's superiors. Ray could hear at intervals Dean's raucous voice upraised in angry discussion with his attendants in the room at the rear of the house. But from the cool, dark chamber where lay the prostrate woman, where hovered her gentle daughter and their sympathetic hostess, no sound seemed to escape. The shaded gallery almost overhung the sea, again at high tide, and the soothing, monotonous plash of the wavelets upon the sand seemed eloquent of the tropic hour when all nature hushes, inert and languid, in the noonday heat, when every eyelid droops in deference to the glare and every unhampered soul is wooed to dreamland. Sandy had thrown himself into one of these great bamboo and wicker reclining chairs and lazily picked up a more than a month old magazine. But he had been about and on duty all night long, he had been busy all the morning. It was hardly a moment before the languorous spell of the hour and the surroundings utterly overcame him—and Sandy slept.

The average human animal, of the male variety at least, is not picturesque in slumber. The feline species has in this respect far the better of its conquerer, man. But occasionally, in youth, is found the exception to inexorable rule, and Sandy Ray had certain advantages. He was slender, lithe, daintily rather than powerfully built. He was barely five feet six in his stocking feet. His head was well shaped and thick, covered with dark, curling, close-cropped hair.

His features were clear-cut and regular, his mouth firm and good, and he had the gift of keeping it shut when asleep and under control when awake. But Sandy's eyes, dark hazel, were after all his best feature, and they were now shaded by lids that were heavily fringed with long, curling lashes almost jetty black, eyelashes that even a Spanish girl might envy. He was clad from head to foot in snowy white, his white cap and gloves were tossed upon the table by his side, and in his cap lay a flat pocket case, in which he had been jotting memoranda when the surgeon happened along. One foot in white, low-cut, canvas shoe hung limply over the edge of the bamboo rest, the other was oddly tucked under the left knee, and with the magazine fallen face downward upon the matting, Sandy had in his last semi-conscious moment turned slightly to his right, and half pillowed his head on the glistening white sleeve, as thoroughly healthy, hearty, clean-looking a lad as ever wore the army blue—a very presentable picture and he didn't in the least know it.

"In the spring a young man's fancy," etc., and in the spring of the previous year Sandy's fancy had turned to thoughts of love, but not at all lightly. That was nearly eighteen months agone and this was late autumn. In both love and war he had had his baptism of fire, and from neither had he come unscathed, for the scars of one still rankled in his soul with a venom that outstung the scar left by the other.

In both encounters Sandy Ray had been seriously wounded, but he was as silent as to one as to the other. Not seventy miles from where he now lay placidly sleeping he had penned the rapturous letter that told a devoted mother her boy loved blissfully and was beloved in turn. Then the girl in the case had married another man and subsequently eloped with still another, and everybody who knew—and who of the old army did not?—exclaimed with one impulse, "What a blessed escape for the Rays!"

And this was not the sole experience that Sandy Ray had had to sober and to form him. Before he had been six months in the service there had been stolen from his quarters at the Presidio a sum of money entrusted to his care. In part it was government funds, which ordinarily he would have to replace by the comprehensive process of having his pay stopped until the sum was covered. But not a little of it belonged to enlisted men who knew and needed no better banker than the son of so beloved an officer as Billy Ray of the old —th Cavalry. His predicament was sore, but short lived. His devoted mother was close at hand; something of her once comfortable fortune still remained, and she had quickly drawn the few thousands needed and replaced the missing sum. It was not intemperance that led to the mishap, but from that day to this the young officer had seen fit to be a total abstainer. From that day until the autumn of 1903, by which time every penny had been

refunded, he had managed to live on half pay, yet look like a gentleman. From that obligation he had now been only ten months free. He did not dream how his manful stand and self-denial had augmented the pride and faith and love they had felt for him, the father and mother who at first had watched with much solicitude and dread; for Sandy, like others of his race and name, had had his laughing, devil-may-care hours in his younger days, his fling at ranch life in the far west, his tilt with cards and wine. Perhaps the very thing needed to steady him at the outset of a career sure to be beset with temptation, was just such an episode as that that befell him at the Presidio of San Francisco in the year '98. Perhaps the very thing needed to assure those who loved him that the lesson had taken firm root was his trial and temptation in the wiles of that beautiful creature who had so bewitched him. "If he could keep steadfast to his resolution in face of such a facer as that," said Colonel Ray, "I'll back the boy against Fate itself."

And who could blame the mother heart that, even to a greater extent after once her doubts and fears had been proved unjust and undeserved, it now centered on her first born as though like some young Bayard he had risen superior to every test and stood before God and man spotless and unafraid—without reproach or fear? Who could marvel that big-hearted, whimsical, long-legged old Blake bragged by the hour of "Billy's boy," now gazetted to the —d, and prophe-

sied of him that in his new regiment whose motto, "Ever Ready," had flashed over every field from Resaca to the Rosebud, "from everglade to cañon," Sandy Ray would win a name like that his father had borne so long in the annals of their comrades of the —th.

But the soldier of one campaign becomes betimes the scapegoat of another; the belauded of one big battle finds himself the butt of press jibes and public sneer; the winner of a May day joust turns up loser in November's fog; the hero of a famous siege comes home to face the cry of cowardice; the saint of a Sunday gathering not so many moons agone is now a sinner in the stripes of Sing Sing! Who can tell what the day may bring forth? "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and virtue must now neither sleep nor stint, if virtue is to find here or hereafter its due reward.

Worn with the long night's vigil and lulled by the soft murmur of the breeze, the soothing melody of the waters, Sandy slept and never dreamed or stirred while the curtain that draped the southward end of the gallery was slowly, stealthily drawn aside.

CHAPTER V.

Blunt came back from the commanding officers in no such mood as he had gone. Blunt had been given no show, as he would say, at any of the plums in the way of stirring service that fell to the lot of other subalterns at the station. Blunt had got himself into the black list of his post commander and looked for a wigging of some kind, not for favor. Blunt was amazed to find his little loved captain apparently disdainful of past differences and thinking only of present opportunity. Blunt had been offered a chance he longed for. Crabtree wished him to set forth that very day with a brace of signal men and forty stout American soldier hearts to scout the southward road, clean out any lurking ladrones and open communication with the railway. "They will surely be reaching out from below," said he; "we must meet them half way, and you're the man to do it."

This from the commander whom last night Blunt would have shamed, and this morning could have hated, well nigh took his breath away. Blunt was stunned to silence.

"Don't you—want to go?" asked Crabtree, in amaze.

"Don't I—want?—well, don't I want more pay, promotion, anything, everything, but did I ever think I'd get it? Of course I want to go, sir, but——"

"Then there are no buts, Mr. Blunt," said Crabtree, briefly. "Go and get ready. I'll tend to the details. Ten days' rations, extra ammunition and the best carts and carabaos we've got."

Blunt went back to his room in a daze. He thought to find Ray sleeping, but Ray was gone. He needed a bit of friendly advice—and aid, and though he had known Ray but a few days he had known of him long, and Ray knew much more about campaigning in the tropics than did Blunt or his fellows. Ray had had much of it: the Forty-Second practically none. The little scouting done from Boutelle had been bloodless work. They went in force and, wisely, recalcitrant natives kept out of the way. Now it might well be different. Now it might well be that they would have bush fighting. Somebody would be hit, perhaps killed, and that somebody might be Blunt himself. If so there were matters that ought to be settled.

"Hilarious!" shouted he, "Donde 'sta Teniente Ray?" Blunt's Spanish was of domestic manufacture.

"No sa-a-abe," drawled the barefoot boy in white.

"Well, Hilarious, porque in hell don't you algo tienpo sa-a-be something? Vamoose! Busca! Pronto! Pronto!"

And with that the messenger departed and the mas-

ter, in obvious excitement, began pulling out the drawers of a much battered field desk and scattering their contents over the bare wooden table.

It was a bachelor den at best. Furniture in the Philippines was reduced to a minimum. A four poster bedstead, broad and commodious, stood at the landward side of the high ceilinged room. Its mosquito bar was gathered up for the day and festooned from the supporting cords by Hilario's deft and dusky hands. Its rattan bottom, firm yet springy, was uncovered, save at the head of the bed, by sheet or counterpane. Pillows, sheets, bolsters and the single blanket were all sunning on the back veranda. Not until nightfall would Hilario prepare his master's couch, and then it little resembled anything of the kind his master had known at home. Mattress of hair or spring there was none. Along the middle of the broad and perforated bottom was stretched a thin pallet, barely three feet wide and three inches in thickness—a thing that had once done duty on his master's camp cot. Over this and carefully covering every inch of the rattan bottom a broad white sheet was snugly drawn and fastened so as to exclude mosquitoes and other tiny winged intruders from below. At the head of the bed, reaching across its entire width, a stout cylinder encased in white did duty for a bolster and against this were the pillows set, almost bolt upright. Adown the length of the couch, against the inner side of the pallet, extended

the mate to the first bolster, the one being known as the *"travesero,"* the other as the "Dutch wife," the purpose of the one being to keep the pillows well up, that of the other to keep even the light coverlet well off the sleeper, for there were nights of land breeze when the lightest load, even a sheet, was a nuisance. Over pallet and "Dutch wife" was spread a soft white sheet and at the bottom lay a thin woolen blanket ready lest the wind should blow from the China sea.

That bedstead, purchased of a predecessor at Boutelle, was the one pretentious article of furniture. All the rest, even the lamp and center table, were of the simplest sort, and neither rug nor carpet was there to be seen. A painted chest was back against the wall. Several barrack and two bamboo chairs were scattered about. A rude washstand, flanked by huge tin pitcher and bucket, stood to the left of the entrance door. A tin hot bath, battered almost shapeless, stood shamefaced beside the washstand, a tempting object to impulsive subalterns who had temper to work off and kicks to bestow. A calico curtain, hung from a long rod at the opposite wall, and looped up to let in the air, revealed a miscellaneous array of khaki coats and trousers, two or three dittos in white drilling, a suit of olive drab and a brace of campaign hats, one of them weather-beaten. Then, hung on shoulder frames of bamboo and covered with sheeting, the uniform blue coats for dress and full dress, with two or three pairs of sky-blue inexpressibles, one striped

with faded robin's egg mauve, another with creamy white. The floor underneath was littered with footgear and leggings—patent leather, black calfskin and tan shooting boots, leather strapped puttees, canvas drabs, some uncouth slippers and one pair of high black boots of India rubber, provided with extension legs that could be drawn up over the thighs. Upon a rude wooden frame were flung a raincoat and cape, a sabre belt or two and some kind of shooting suit that Blunt had accumulated in climes where birds were plentiful. He had not seen so much as a snipe in Luzon. A double-barreled shot gun leaned, with a companion Krag, against the bamboo sheathing in the southeast corner. A new sabre swung by its service "slings" on the opposite wall, side by side with the antique "frog sticker" he had worn in the lively days of '99, on which well worn relic, by the way, zealous customs officials demanded payment of duty even of gentlemen coming a second time to the island, on the ground that one sword was all an officer could wear and all others were superfluities. A few prints, photographs and a military map of the island were tacked here and there to the elastic wall, and that was the visible extent of the household goods and chattels of a senior lieutenant of the line, serving in the Philippines in 1903. Opening off this, the main bedroom was the smaller apartment assigned, until he should choose his own quarters, to Lieutenant Ray.

It was some time before Hilario returned. He

came empty handed. He said the Teniente had todos vamoosed and he couldn't find him. Blunt stared but said nothing. Ray would doubtless turn up at tiffin and tiffin was nearly due. He was busy at the moment searching for one or two papers he thought to find in the field desk, but could not. He scribbled an order on the post commissary for certain supplies he needed for his field mess chest and despatched Hilario with orders to fetch the stores at once and keep a lookout for Lieutenant Ray. He was still busy searching through and nervously tossing aside folded paper after paper when the adjutant's voice was heard at the gate, and in came Fethers, just to see how Blunt was getting on. Captain Crabtree had told him to ask if there was anything he, Crab, could do, which sounded very magnanimous to Fethers, and very empty to Blunt.

"I thank him, no," said Blunt, decisively. "He has done quite enough in giving me this chance."

"He said," quoth Fethers, with slow significance, "you seemed—er—reluctant to go."

Blunt flushed hotly. "That's a contemptible way of putting it," he burst forth, impetuous and angry. "He knows well I want to go, and have been wanting to go right along, but he doesn't know and can't be expected to know that there are things I'd like to settle before I go." Then with sudden resolution, yet coloring with embarrassment: "Fethers, every man in my own regiment here is deep in debt—all owing

to that damned uniform order—every man except, of course, Crabtree, whom I won't ask. Can you lend me a hundred dollars?"

Fethers possibly knew what was coming. Fethers as adjutant had seen something of the reminders certain creditors were sending officers of the line who had had to provide themselves with a huge outfit of new regulation clothing, equipment, etc., provide for their families, and pay their own heavy mess bills on the weary way over. Fethers, could he have had his way, would have turned back every missive of the kind that came from department to post headquarters, but Fethers was but human. He at least had no debts to pay, and a small balance at a home bank, but there he meant to hold his nestegg. He "couldn't without serious inconvenience," he replied, in much embarrassment, and Blunt marveled that he had ever asked. "Don't think about it again," he said. "I'll raise it somehow, only there isn't much time, as we start so soon." So Fethers, breathing freer, yet feeling mean, made his escape. He told no man at the time of Blunt's bungling request, but—he remembered.

Not twenty minutes later Sandy Ray, whom Hilario had been unable to find, came briskly in. The wind had freshened, the sea had begun to respond, and he brought with him a glisten of salt spray on the visor of his white cap. Blunt looked up with a grin. "Been over to see your refugees, I see," said he, and

was surprised to note that a shade seemed instantly to fall on Sandy's frank and soldierly face. "Beg pardon," went on his host, in hurried apology. "I didn't mean to pry into your affairs. The moisture on the visor said you were just from the shore and the colonel's quarters are the only ones close enough. Sherlock Holmes, you know."

"Oh, that's all right," answered the cavalryman, promptly, still with slight constraint. "I've had—Mrs. Blake was asking me—why, what on earth have you been doing?" And Ray's eyes went flashing over the littered table and disordered desk.

"Off for a hike," was the brief reply. "Start in two hours or less, and I've got to straighten out some papers. Damn that Hilarious; what keeps him so long?" and Blunt sprang up and strode to the doorway. Sandy passed on into his room and presently came forth as Blunt re-entered. Blunt saw perplexity, anxiety, trouble in the fine face before him. "You bothered, too?" he asked.

"Mislaid a pocketbook somewhere," answered the visitor, briefly. "Funny thing 'bout it is I thought I had it when I went over there. Dr. Scammon said Mrs. Blake wished to see me."

"Anything of—consequence?" asked Blunt, with certain significance in tone.

"Well, yes, rather," hesitated Ray. He had pulled off his gloves and cap, and was now mopping a moist forehead.

"Cash?" queried Blunt.

"Not much. Don't carry any as a rule. Bank what little I've got."

"'Nough to lend a hundred dollars to a man you don't know from Adam?" asked Blunt, sturdily, yet ruefully.

"If it's you, yes," said Ray. "Want to use it here?"

"Nope—New York, and it's a damned gouge, but —I'd—promised."

"Fix that easy 'nough," clipped Mr. Ray, cheerfully. "Give you a cheque right now," and forgetting for a moment the previous quest, darted into his room and came back with his cheque-book.

"Hundred enough?" he asked.

"Not by several, but it's all I'll take—or send, and I'm ashamed—no, I'm not, for it isn't my fault!— I'm disgusted to ask for it, but there isn't a man of ours with an unmortgaged dollar 'cept Crab, and I can't ask him."

"If two hundred would help," began Ray, slowly, for he was in doubt. He had but three.

"It would, Ray, and it wouldn't. It's kind of you, but I can't take it. One hundred I must take or ——"

"The commanding officer's compliments, sir, and desires to see Lieutenant Blunt," came the announcement of that precise orderly at the door.

"Coming directly," answered Blunt, and reached

for his hat. It dislodged some papers as it was whisked from the table. "That's the hell of these post commanders *pro tem*," said Blunt. "The colonel now, after once sending for me, would stop in on his way to tiffin, or speak to me there, knowing the lot he's given me to do, but these accidentals must impress you with their consequence, and so they make you come and dance attendance at the office. I'll be back in a minute."

Ray thoughtfully bent and picked up the papers that had gone fluttering to the floor—two or three loose half sheets. Then there was one little packet, rubber snapped together, that had plumped on the wooden boarding like a shot on a drum. He was trying to rearrange them when a footstep in the front room caused him to look up. Lieutenant Walker stood at the inner doorway, silently observing him. "Don't let me intrude," said he. "Where's Blunt? I—want to catch him before he goes."

"Over at the office," answered Sandy, briefly, noting the while that Walker's eyes were on the cheque book, and wondering if he had any claim on Blunt. Walker turned and vanished. Ray returned to his task. He could not help it, that a line at the top of a page caught his eye. He could help it still less that it gave him something of a start. But Hilario shuffled in at the moment, laden with a box-ful of tins and jars from the commissary. He never so much as glanced at the young officer after enter-

ing, but went swiftly about his work, and Ray, after a moment, stowed the papers in a vacant pigeon-hole, and sauntered out upon the veranda, where the sea breeze was blowing finely. He needed to think.

There had been comment, it seems, on Mrs. Blake's remaining practically alone in her spacious quarters when the colonel hurried off to Manila. True, she had with her a worthy couple who had been of their army household ever since the honeymoon days of the long ago. The wife had been her first housemaid at old Fort Russell, and that lively young creature, after breaking supposedly non-commissioned hearts about the post, had been wooed and won by an Irish son of Mars who had followed the guidon of Blake's troop half across the continent. Corporal Moon had taken his discharge from the service of Uncle Sam in course of years and entered that of the Blakes, and though now well along in years, the Moons had never faltered in their allegiance. Mrs. Blake was as safe, with them to watch her, as she would be with a royal bodyguard, but the few women at Boutelle wondered at her not wanting to go to Manila.

She had her own reasons for that. She had been there twice and had much enjoyed many features of the first visit and a few of the second, but the army friends they had visited were no longer there. The brief experience she had once had in a Manila hotel was discouraging. There was nothing new going on and Gerald, her husband, might only be detained a

week. Altogether, Mrs. Blake decided not to go, a now was glad, for she was here to help two people least, whose sorrowful plight much appealed to h It was after a conference with Dr. Scammon that sent for Ray in perplexity as to what course she be pursued with Dean. Scammon said his pre place was a room in the hospital, if not the gu house. Mrs. Dean had hysterically declared t wherever her husband went she must follow. G trude had said nothing, but it was evident that would share her mother's fortunes whatever t might be. Some few minutes, therefore, after S dy's coming had been announced, Mrs. Blake gratefully acceded to the girl's half timid suggest that she go to her father's bedside a few minutes; might be able to quiet and comfort him. And n Mrs. Blake had opportunity for a word or two al with Mrs. Dean.

And so Sandy had waited, and fallen asleep, then, awaking suddenly from his siesta, was as s denly conscious that some one had been hover about his chair, of having surely felt the light to of finger tips upon his left arm, and thinking it Mrs. Blake, had stirred lazily like the spoiled boy was, stretched, yawned, opened his eyes at sound fluttering skirt and hurried footfall, and then sa slender, white-clad form just vanishing into the br hallway and beyond his sight.

CHAPTER VI.

Just as Blunt had prophesied, the "cabal" against the post commander had come to a head at the mess, and Blunt was not there to see. On the previous afternoon that outspoken young officer, with his little force, despite the fatiguing experience of the sand march to Sulpicio and back, had gone striding sturdily away southward, followed until out of sight in the fringing bamboo by many an anxious eye at the post, and by many a furtive glance from the dusky faces in the neighboring barrio. Parade had been dispensed with. The officers of the mess, minus the senior, assembled at the stated time, some in white, some in freshly ironed khaki, all in rather silent mood, which in soldiers, sailors and marines is ominous of ill for somebody.

Not until the last man had straggled up the wooden steps did Captain Crabtree permit himself to appear in his own doorway, looking very cool and spick and span in snowy raiment, white cap, shoes and gloves. Mess call had sounded sharp on time, and the mess, the mess boys and the dinner were waiting. With the eyes of his juniors upon him, Crabtree sauntered airily down the walk, doffed his cap to Mrs. Fethers,

and leaning on the fence, entertained that unappreciative young matron with a few remarks about the loveliness of the day and the delight of the sea breeze, to all of which, with an eye on the assembled mess, she responded but feebly. Then he tacked across the shell road at sight of Chaplain and Mrs. Stanhope returning from a call, and stopped again to converse affably with them, whereat the mess set its teeth and said things not intended for the ears of mess servants. Then he came placidly along until within a hundred paces of the angering group of juniors, and there deliberately stood and questioned a sergeant whom he beckoned from the seaward gate, and then to the fuming wrath of his messmates turned away with the non-commissioned officer in attendance and as deliberately walked to that gate as though some matter of importance called him thither. Then muttered blasphemy was heard at the bungalow and one or two officers bolted within doors, and then who should come along, bound for a stroll on the beach before dark, but Mrs. Shane and her well disciplined lord. And then, finally, not over at the adjutant's office, but somewhere about the mess building or enclosure, loud and clear again did mess call sound upon the evening air, and the sea breeze blew Mrs. Shane's laughing, provoking comment more than half way back to the startled group on the veranda.

"That's for you, Mr. Post Commander," cried she of the sparkling eyes. "And all for keeping those

poor hungry fellows waiting," and Crabby's face was a sight to see. He feigned to be deaf to her remarks and absorbed in what two soldiers were telling him, but many a body had heard and so had he. It would never do now to break instantly away. It was his rôle to calmly finish his conversation; then as calmly and relentlessly to investigate. They who had proposed taking seats and going on with dinner without their senior were glad on the whole that they were overruled, for Crab's face was gray with wrath when he reached the steps.

"Gentlemen," he began, "who ordered that call sounded?"

And no man answered. Silent, embarrassed, but by no means abashed, they stood before him.

"You perfectly well realize that none of our trumpeters dare play such a trick unless some officer stands sponsor," snapped Crabtree, "and so I repeat, if all are here, who ordered that call sounded?"

And still there was no reply.

"Mr. Ray," began Crab again, "you have so recently come among us that I cannot in mind associate you with this deliberate affront to the commanding officer, but I shall ask you first, as the sole representative here this evening of the cavalry service, whether you *know* who ordered the trumpeter to sound that call?"

"I do not, sir," said Sandy, very simply.

"Captain Prince, do you?"

"Beyond the fact that I heard the call I know nothing about it whatever, sir," was the captain's uncompromising reply. And thus in succession did Crabtree accost each one of the mess then present, and angering, though with such respect as they could command, they answered no. Whereupon when the last man, the native butler, was questioned and the same negative was given by him, the commander drooped with the heavy weight of his defeat, and saying: "This is most extraordinary, gentlemen, and of course cannot end here," signalled that they should take their seats, but turned himself to his orderly and sent for the sergeant major.

Dinner went off in constrained silence. Conversation was impossible. There being no guests there was no wine. Even the cheap claret so readily obtained in Manila was considered inappropriate in view of the fact that, four out of five, the members still had their mess clothes to pay for. When the sergeant major came the captain punctiliously excused himself to his fellows and went with the non-commissioned officer to the porch. He wished the name of the trumpeter who sounded the call and the sergeant-major could not tell him. "I had every mother's son of 'em up, captain, and every one flatly denied it. Moreover, there's not one of them who can't prove he was nowhere near the mess this night."

"There's been some tremendous lying somewhere," thought Crabtree, "and it's too much for me." Imme-

diately after coffee was served and without taking the floor and starting his customary talk, Crabtree early left the mess and began further investigation, and not a thing did he really discover to throw light on the occurrence.

Beyond a mere line to the effect that they had bivouacked at San Sulpicio and would resume the march soon after dawn, not a word came from Blunt on the following day. Not a word did the post commander learn as to the perpetrator of last night's indignity. So, this evening, parade was ordered. This evening mess call was sounded at the adjutant's office as before. This evening the officers assembled as they did twenty-four hours earlier, and this evening Crab dawdled as he did the previous day, even to going to the westward gate. When he finally approached the mess he was surprised to find the veranda vacant. When he entered the mess room he was amazed to find the officers seated and at their soup. At his entrance and before he could open his lips to speak, they promptly and silently arose and stood attention.

"Gentlemen," began Crabtree, "this is a discourtesy to your commanding officer," to which no one responded. "We will take this, in connection with other matters, up later." Then as he dropped into his chair they gravely followed suit, resumed their seats and a lively conversation which did not seem to include their chief. Crabtree could hardly believe the evidence of his senses.

Coffee having been served and everybody about ready to go, Captain Prince, at the opposite end of the table, looked to his one superior present for the expected signal, but Crabtree was intent on action and vengeance. "The waiters will withdraw," said he, which they did not at all understand, so Prince glanced over his shoulder, briefly added "Vamoose," and this was explicit.

"Gentlemen," said Crab, "I now desire explanation of your most extraordinary behavior—of this apparently deliberate affront to the commahnding officer."

"Captain Crabtree," said Captain Prince, rising with much deliberation and with consummate *sang froid*—there was not a year's difference in the date of their commissions—"I am designated to answer for the mess, and the answer is this: In all official matters we obey you without question. In social matters we have rights equal to your own. You have formulated a set of rules that, in spite of our objections, we might have observed but for the fact that you were the first and most persistent violator. In plain language, Captain Crabtree, the mess declines to be bound by rules that you break at will." Whereupon, in decorous silence and with much deliberation every man except the post commander arose, some lighted cigars or cigarettes and all sauntered forth upon the veranda.

Over across the way a silvery laugh pealed on the breathless evening air, and Crabtree, amazed, enraged, yet vaguely conscious that he had overstepped

the limits of his authority, found new fuel for the flame of his anger in the fact that Mrs. Shane had surely been taken into the confidence of some of the mess and was there to witness the revolt. Such a thing had never been heard of in all his experience. Crabtree sprang to his feet, called Captain Prince to follow him, sent his orderly for the post adjutant, and never noticing the silent salute with which he was scrupulously favored, hurried straightway to his quarters, leaving the field to the conspirators.

"Ever stumble on the likes of this before?" asked Mr. Walker of Sandy Ray, who, speechless and troubled, stood at the edge of the veranda, gazing out over the now moonlit sea.

Ray shook his head. He had been brought up in the army. He believed in discipline and had never before seen a commander humiliated by his officers. "Tell me one thing," said he. "Hasn't Captain Crabtree a right to the belief that there has been sneak work somewhere? Some one must have lied about that call."

"No one lied," answered Walker, promptly. "Crab asked who of our number ordered it sounded. No one ordered. Then he ordered the trumpeter found and they couldn't find. 'Cause why—no one of the trumpeters had anything to do with it."

"One of the waiters then?" queried Sandy, measurably relieved. Many of the natives were far better buglers than were those of the Forty-Second, and

coming from one of these, an ignorant son of the soil, the affront or indignity would have lost most of its sting.

"Waiters nothing," answered Mr. Walker. "There's been no sneak work whatever, either. No one was ordered to sound that call. The sounder did it of his own free will and accord and Crab hasn't wit enough to guess. When the row blows over I'll tell him who blew. So don't *you* worry, Mr. Ray." And with his hands in his pockets and his head high in air, Mr. Walker took himself off. It was not good that this new comer from the cavalry should insinuate sneak work on so small a basis, and Sandy saw the point and started after his fellow subaltern to offer prompt apology.

In high dudgeon, apparently, Mr. Walker had flung himself down the steps and away to the westward gate that opened on the sea. In much concern Sandy followed and even called after Walker's swift-fading form. In a moment the pursued had turned sharp to his right and was speedily shut from view by the south wing of the spacious quarters assigned to Colonel Blake. And still Sandy followed. A moment later he was surprised to come suddenly upon his quarry, halted in front of Blake's broad and roomy double doorway. He saw Lieutenant Walker gazing up to the half open lattice on the second floor where the breezy veranda, after the fashion of the Philippines, almost half overhung the walk below.

Gertrude Dean.

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Lieutenant Sandy Ray.

He saw in the moonlight a slender form, a white, appealing face, and he heard in pleading tones—tones which spoke of sorrow and sore anxiety—these hurried words: "I'll be right down if you'll only wait," whereupon the white-robed form at the lattice shot from view, and, barely five seconds later, the white-clad subaltern underneath half turned and glanced along the sea walk, caught sight of Ray swift advancing, and instantly turned again and strode huffily away, disappearing beyond the northward corner.

Which was how it happened that as Ray reached the entrance he came suddenly almost face to face with that slender girl, little over seventeen, with a world of woe in her dark and lustrous eyes, with appeal and distress quivering upon her pallid lips. It was the girl he had helped carry from the shore to Mrs. Blake's salon, Gertrude Dean, and at sight of him, by no means the man she had hastened to see, the child recoiled startled. "Was it you," she cried. "Oh, I didn't mean—I thought——" And she covered her face in her fragile hands and fairly reeled against the stone doorway, unnerved, almost undone.

"It *was* Mr. Walker," answered Ray, soothingly. "Let me help you upstairs, Miss Dean. You are far from strong or well," and he would have drawn her forth and thrown the other arm about her, but she shrank and sobbed:

"I *must* speak with him," she cried. "He *was* Harry's friend." And then Ray took alarm, so violent was her distress. As she could neither go nor suffer herself to be led, he hurried through the tunnel-like entrance and up the bordering stairway to the second floor in hopes of finding Mrs. Blake. Voices were again audible—angry voices—in the room occupied by the elder Dean—not yet had the doctor succeeded in his scheme to get him out of the house and over to hospital—but nowhere could Ray see anything of her whom he sought. A lamp burned dimly in the dining room beyond and the broad way to the kitchen gallery stood open, so thither he hastened. Vain! There were smouldering embers on the quaint Philippine open range, but not a servant was visible. He could hear them gossiping in the court below. He would not tap at the invalid's door; that might awaken her, and he inferred that she must be sleeping since Gertrude was at large. He ran again down stairs, intending to be very positive and peremptory, even if he had to carry her, to bring Miss Dean, if a possible thing, back to her senses and the second story.

But when he reached the ground floor again Miss Dean was gone. On the stone flagging, just where she stood a moment before in all the abandonment of her grief, some dark object caught his eye and he stooped and picked it up, carried it into the bright

moonshine at the entrance and found himself staring stupidly at the cover of the pocket note book missing since the second day before—the book only, for all the contents, like the girl, were gone.

CHAPTER VII.

Another day had dawned on Camp Boutelle, and though earth and sea and sky were all that were beautiful, the indications as to matters military and domestic seemed set for storm. Captain Crabtree and his second in temporary command, Captain Prince, had come to words if not to blows. Captain Prince had told the post, and would-be mess, commander that he for one would no longer sit at meal with such a crank—that was the exact descriptive—and for the first time it began to dawn on Crabtree that mess conditions in the army of a blooming republic, and in that of a magnificent old monarchy, not only never had been in accord, but, in this day and generation at least, never would be. Nothing in the customs and traditions of our democratic service gave the faintest precedent for his action, while almost everything in the methods of the British Army had seemed to point his way. Crab had gone so far, when Major Forrest presided and the arriving officers of the Forty-Second had joined the mess, as to urge that the junior lieutenant should sit at the opposite end of the board, facing the senior officer and should be addressed as "Mr. Vice," but neither Forrest nor any one else con-

curred. That, said Forrest, was the caterer's seat, and whoever was caterer for the month should sit there where he could most readily control the waiters. Prince happened to occupy that important chair when the cavalry was hurried away, and Prince had flatly told his commanding officer, as one of the "bugle investigation," that he would sit there no longer, nor would he occupy any seat at the mess until Crabtree withdrew his obnoxious laws—or himself. Crab, of course, would submit, he said, to no dictation from his juniors. Prince turned over the keys and accounts as caterer to Lieutenant Belden, the treasurer; breakfasted at his own quarters from his own company's table; accepted Mrs. Shane's invitation for tiffin and the Stanhopes for dinner. Almost every man of the mess had finished breakfast and gone before the commanding officer appeared with visage as black as the thunder clouds that came billowing sometimes from the China Sea. The two officers present looked up, sprang up (a thing hitherto never even thought of), said in suspicious unison "Good morning, sir," solemnly retook their seats and with equal or greater solemnity, Crab took his. One of his preachments had been that gentlemen at mess should avoid all disturbing or "shoppy" talk. The conversation should be joyous, spirited, gay, and to this end Crab generally essayed to lead it. To-day he spoke not at all. The more he probed that bugle business the deeper he found the mystery. Every bugler, as the sergeant

said, established an alibi. The bandsmen were all otherwise accounted for. The Filipino mess men, as was to be expected, "no sa-a-abe'd" every tentative, and yet Crab could swear the call was sounded somewhere about the mess bungalow, probably the back piazza. If so the perpetrator must be known to some at least of the servants, yet all said nay.

And Crab had other worries. Prince's defection might lead to more. Suppose, for instance, that Belden, Burdick, Hikeman, Ray, Walker, *et als.* were quietly to quit the mess. Suppose—well, the more Crab thought of it the uglier it looked. What was there in law and regulations to prevent the seceders starting another, or boarding around, or living on company rations at nine dollars the month if they so elected? Many an officer in old army days, as Crab had often heard, had had to "live with the company" when serving at lone, isolated places on the plains. Mess affairs were indeed in a mess, and that was by no means all. Blunt had now been gone two days and two nights and not a line had come since he left Sulpicio. From the high tower of Sulpicio's massive old church came word that by day the smoke, and by night the glow of distant fires, could plainly be seen along the line of the southward road, and this news was sent to Crabtree, also tales of trembling natives who fled for refuge to town and post, as they declared, because the woods were full of ladrones and because the "head hunters" were down from the hills. People were be-

ing pillaged and decapitated, said these refugees. Sulpicio begged for a big guard, and Crab denied the request and wisely. It would have split what was left of his command in two sections, beyond supporting distance of each other. Suspicion as to the loyalty of Sulpicio's presidente and populace was no new thing at Boutelle—Blake had long been of that way of thinking—so Crab was sorely bothered about himself, about Blunt, about the mess, about the tales the Pittsburg's people could be counted on to tell at Manila, and now came new trouble right at his door. Scammon, the post surgeon, dropped in to say that Dean, thus far harbored under the roof of Colonel Blake, was in such condition, mentally and physically, as to necessitate his being removed to a room in the hospital building where he could be placed under restraint, and if Dean went poor Mrs. Dean declared she would go, too, and that, of course, meant Gertrude for whom Scammon and the Stanhopes had learned to feel deep sympathy before even the family's advent at the post. Mrs. Blake, too, had been drawn to the helpless girl, because of her devotion to her mother and her brave and patient effort to smother her own grief, in order the better to control that well nigh heart-broken woman.

Three of the officers, as Crab well knew, had quite disturbed Colonel Blake by the frequency of their visits to San Sulpicio after the Deans' arrival there, for Blake could see no good whatever in Dean and of

course saw little of his family. Lieutenant Walker, it seems, had been quite a constant caller at the Deans "in town," as they had a way of referring to Sulpicio. Lieutenant Walker and Dean's only son until a fortnight back had been on quite intimate terms, the young men foregathering whenever possible, but Harry Dean would seldom show at the post, as his father was practically ostracized. A really fine, manly, soldierly fellow was this young Dean, one who had served creditably in the ranks of the volunteers, but could get no influential backer for commission in the regular service. "Old Dean's boy" was apt to find few friends in circles where his father was well known.

And now in gallant effort to protect his mother and sister—he seldom mentioned the father—this brave American lad had lost his life, leaving mother and sister plunged in grief, and Dean, the father, almost delirious. Mrs. Blake had indeed her hands full in caring for such a stricken family, but Mrs. Blake was a woman little daunted by obstacles and very much set in her ways. In the absence of her colonel it was her duty, she said, to extend every possible aid to these bereaved and stricken ones. It was no time to think of the evil deeds of the head of the family, especially when they were beyond proof.

In fine, an atmosphere of gloom seemed to overhang the neighborhood of Camp Boutelle and the adjacent towns and barrios, and this despite radiant

sunshine, flashing waters and fine sea breeze. Even Sandy Ray, of whom his comrades were saying during the spring days at Malinta, "the boy's beginning to take notice and be chipper again," seemed showing the effects of the general depression. He was still occupying the spare room in Blunt's bachelor suite and watching for every possible chance to get away on the trail of the squadron. He hated to be in garrison at any time when his fellows were afield; he more than hated it now.

For Mr. Ray was sorely perplexed over the way things were going, as he would have put it. The one person in whom he would have confided was now the one in whom he could not. "Aunt Nan" of the old days was to the full as sympathetic and cordial as ever, when he was able to see her, but that was perhaps the real cause of the trouble. Aunt Nan was so very sympathetic she had taken under her wing these homeless, luckless waifs of San Sulpicio; had burdened herself with a bed-ridden, broken-hearted woman whose waking hours were spent mainly in weeping—with a broken-down drug-consumer, as it now appeared, a morphine fiend, who, deprived of his "dope," was having a fight for his life and reason, and, finally, with the care of a young girl who, with all her devotion to her mother, with all her sorrow over the tragic fate of her brother, with all her anxiety as to their future, had failed to command a vestige of Ray's sympathy. There were things concern-

ing her that demanded explanation and that, until explained, would bar her from his esteem. Ever since the noontide of his interrupted siesta on the veranda Ray had felt certain that it was she who stole so noiselessly to his side, that it was she whose hand had lightly touched his arm, that it was she who fled instantly at his waking, bearing with her the only possible valuable and portable asset in sight. Moreover, he was now convinced that between her and "Hasty" Walker there existed an understanding of some kind, and that Walker respected her no more than he did. Walker had turned his back on her and gone, when in her hour of grief she begged him to stay. Walker had turned from the open, moonlit beach into the dark and tangled shrubbery, whither she, Gertrude Dean, had followed, leaving on the very spot where she had so eagerly and mistakenly greeted the next comer, the proof presumptive of her connection with the loss of Sandy Ray's property.

So far as intrinsic value was concerned there was little to make that pocketbook worth purloining. In currency and Manila bank notes there were only some thirty dollars. But there was a letter from his mother, there were some affairs and memoranda of his own, that the young officer would little relish finding in unfriendly hands. It probably looked more tempting than it proved to be valuable, and Sandy Ray, believing as he did that the sins of the father were not only visited upon, but apt to live again in the

children, had little doubt in his own mind, from the moment he discovered the loss, as to who was the thief. His convictions were later strengthened when it appeared that between Gertrude Dean and young Walker there had been, and probably still existed, relations of a confidential if not intimate nature, and Walker, who had not scrupled to see her often, so Sandy learned, in her father's loosely guarded home in town, dared not violate the sanctity of the colonel's quarters at the post and refused to see or hear her there. Ray had hurried after Walker that evening intent on making amends for his impulsive words, in fact, on begging Walker's pardon for the wound to his regimental pride. Now he would beg Walker's pardon for nothing.

Nor could he see his way to warning Mrs. Blake. Both when under her roof and here at Blunt's he stood simply in the relation of guest. He could prove nothing in her house and could probe nothing in Blunt's. If Blunt were here he could ask him flat-footed what he knew of the Deans. Had there not been a break of some kind in the friendship existing between young Dean and Walker? Rumor had it that the two had not been seen together for nearly a week before the sudden night attack that fell so heavily on Sulpicio. Sandy felt that he ought to learn the truth about these people whom Mrs. Blake, "Aunt Nan" of old, had so trustingly taken to her heart and home, even though she must have known something of her colonel's con-

tempt for the husband and father now so miserably fallen in mind, body and estate. Sandy had ventured to say something about "heaping coals of fire on a prostrate head," and Aunt Nan had laughed one of her merry, old-time laughs.

"What earthly difference can that make now, Sandy? If Colonel Blake were here he would be doing just exactly as I am, no matter what that poor wretch might have said. It's the little mother I'm thinking of—and that sweet, sorrowing daughter." And then Aunt Nannie's gentle eyes had filled with such a wishful, wistful look and then begun to brim over, and Sandy divined with swift and sudden force the thought that was uppermost in her fond and sorrowing heart, and Sandy could have kicked himself, for long years before there had been a beloved child, Aunt Nan's one delight and joy and solace in the long summers when her soldier husband was away with his troop, campaigning, and well could Sandy remember his own mother's weeping, the hush and grief and sympathy that for an entire week had put summary stop to all garrison gayety, when Gerald Blake's only daughter was taken from the stricken mother's arms. Oh, what heartbreaks sometimes came to the women left to watch and rear the little ones in those old frontier forts, while the fathers were afield! No, Sandy could say nothing of his worry now. Perhaps when Blake or Blunt returned it might be possible to seek and learn. Perhaps Blake

knew, and had never told his wife, that Dean was probably little worse in his way than were his womenfolk in theirs.

And yet, not once up to this moment, had Ray heard one aspersion or insinuation at their expense, but that was one of the ways of the Army. Flatly as they might condemn the father there was no man in the mess who would say aught against the family. Whatsoever, therefore, might be Sandy Ray's suspicion, it must be kept sacred and secret to himself until his colonel's coming.

So resolving he had betaken himself to Blunt's big four poster, with its rattan bottom, top and side bolsters, mosquito bar, and general gloom, the night before. Sandy hated a row of any kind in garrison, though he had proved himself a stout young soldier in more than one sharp affair both here in Luzon and within our own blessed boundaries at home. He had had nothing whatsoever to do with the revolt of the mess against its well-meaning but misguided senior. He was somewhat whimsically, humorously interested in the affair until he saw how deeply Crabtree took it to heart, and then he could have found it quite possible to urge his new associates to let Crab have his way, do him the deference he expected, even if it was un-American and absurd. He deplored it that somebody should have so far forgotten the tenets of a club as to betray to Crab's tormentor, Mrs. Shane, their intent to pull him down, and it annoyed him not

a little that on the two occasions when he had since met her, once quite by chance and once quite obviously by her own contrivance, she had merrily insisted on trying to draw him into conversation on the subject. Sandy, in fact, was beginning to dislike that quite bewitching little matron and to feel the need, when in her presence, of guarding both his tongue and temper. He had awakened early, after a night of healthful sleep, and was aware soon after dawn of Hilario flitting about the room in his bare, brown feet and with his brown, inscrutable face. Ray had jumped into loose khaki raiment, mounted a stocky little native pony and galloped away up the beach for a plunge in the salt breakers. He had galloped back for dress and breakfast and a look at Crab's well-drilled "steadies" at guard-mounting, and having dodged the Shanes' veranda on his way from mess, was not a little nettled to find that he had not succeeded in dodging Mrs. Shane. A coaxing hand was laid on his arm, and a mocking little face, with such merry dimples and pretty white teeth and ruddy lips, peeped round his shoulder, and a laughing, teasing voice began:

"*Two* pennies for your thoughts, Mr. Sandy Ray, and what new mischief are you meditating now at Captain Crab's expense?" He could have shaken off her hand in his vexation, for Walker, too, was at her side, and in stolid disapprobation of her forgetting him for others. And then as luck would have it, the orderly of the commanding officer came to say the

commanding officer requested Mr. Walker's presence at the office, whereat the youth so requistioned cast a meaning glance at the lady and went unwillingly away. "Which makes *you* my escort home," said she, in mischievous triumph, "and now, sir, unless you would have it said on every side that we had quarreled, I'll trouble you for your arm."

Which was how it happened that, five minutes later, when Captain Crabtree came forth from a very unsatisfying reprimand he found excuse to give to Mr. Walker, he encountered, at a sudden turn on the shaded pathway, Mrs. Shane, close clinging to the side of the cavalry subaltern and looking volumes of merriment and mischief up into his half-averted eyes. Which was how it happened that Crabtree had no word for either of the juniors, who greeted him with such access of deference at the breakfast table, which was how it happened that a sudden idea flashed through Crabtree's not over brilliant brain, and, barely stopping to finish his coffee, fuming with impatience, wrath and the sting of recent defeat, the captain left the messroom for the office, sent for Lieutenant Ray and on that young gentleman's entrance accosted him abruptly:

"Mr. Ray, did you not tell me you did not know who sounded that mess call the other night?"

"No, sir, I told you I did not know who *ordered* it sounded." The answer was respectful but firm, and

.... hour earlier, on that home
had said that it was Mr. Walker.

"And now another matter, Mr. F
that—most impertinent young perso
Almeric Paget."

"I did not, sir," was the instant ar
not know it was your name."

CHAPTER VIII.

For a moment the two officers studied each other in silence. If there was anything Crab believed in it was blue blood, and that it could not lie, yet he had just accused his subordinate of evasion. He knew Colonel Ray, and the honor in which he was held in the service. He had been drawn to Lieutenant Ray from all he had heard of him, and from the little he had seen. But, discipline must be maintained, said he, and if this young gentleman had seen fit to ally himself with the reprobates of the mess, he must be made to feel the power of the post commander, taught the error of his ways, and then, when properly contrite, he might again be taken in favor. But for the time Crab's heart was sore and his temper soured and his judgment sapped. He knew that Mrs. Shane and all whom she could influence were laughing at him. He knew the mess was in revolt and had practically defied him. He knew that he must promptly regain his ascendency, personal and official, or his prestige was gone for good and all. He had thought to discover the amateur bugler who had so flouted him, and though he had strong suspicion he had still no proof.

He had questioned every minion about the mess and stoutly had they denied all knowledge. He had even set a trusty sergeant to work, a man whose detective skill he had had reason to respect, but as yet the trusty had made no discovery worth mentioning. He had even a half-formed project in his brain of taking Ray into semi-confidential relations, since there could be no intimacies with officers of his own regiment, and knowing that Ray was almost a stranger to them and could therefore have formed as yet no ties among them, he had thought it not impossible that Ray would welcome the idea of being held and treated as a comrade and friend, by an officer so much his senior in years and station. But first, and this was the "bumptious Briton" part of it, Crab decreed that Ray must be made to feel the power of the commanding officer, to realize the width of the official gulf between them, to fear, in fine, his post commander. Then he would doubtless all the more seek the captain's favor and welcome his friendship. Then Crab might expect to worm out of him everything he knew concerning men and matters at the mess, and then Crab's domination might be made complete.

But at the outset, at the first approach, he found himself actually chilled and repulsed. A few hours since he was wrathful because Mrs. Shane knew that his long hidden name was Almeric Paget. Now he was almost amazed that Ray did not. Moreover, Ray's manner plainly said not only that he did not

know the commanding officer bore so distinguished a name, but he even did not care. Crab had seen fit to conceal it for years, but, once it was known, he expected people to be seriously impressed, and Ray was not impressed at all. Ray would no more have thought to uncover in accosting royalty than not to uncover in accosting a woman. Moreover, had it developed that Crabtree's lineage was the most distinguished known to these United States, all the more would it have carried an obligation—that of amende to a junior officer compelled to listen in unresenting silence to the accusation of duplicity, for what else is "evasion." Ray's heart was hot within him, but his head, already high held and back, was comparatively cool. The experiences of four years or more of subaltern life were beginning to tell. There had been no thought of evasion on his part. Reverting to the previous question, it had been exactly as Sandy stated, "Do you know who ordered that call sounded?" and at the time the question was asked Ray knew neither who ordered nor who sounded. As matters stood, therefore, Crabtree's pitch of pride and exasperation had stirred him to two unwarrantable accusations in less than two minutes, and he, who had sought to gain the upper hand, had thereby lost it.

But Crab when at his best was slow to imbibe impressions, and this particular occasion he was well nigh at his worst. Ray, on the other hand, ordinarily quick to boil over, saw to the full the advantage he

had gained and with it became calm as Crabtree was fretful. Then Crabtree made his next false step.

"Well, one thing is certain, Mr. Ray, you are concerned in it equally with the rest. Mrs. Shane has been told all manner of things concerning affairs at the mess that ought to have been kept to yourselves. It is most extraordinary, sir, that the commanding officer should be—er—made sport of by—women of the garrison. It is not to be tolerated, and you young gentlemen have evidently been priming her with—with misinformation."

And then, in his wrath, and despite the calm of his manner, Mr. Ray in turn made his mistake.

"Speak for your own regiment, Captain Crabtree, but excuse me. I have had nothing to do with—with these affairs in the past, and I mean to cut loose from the—possibility in the future."

The captain turned in his chair and glared one moment before he trusted himself to speak.

"What do you mean, Mr. Ray?" he demanded.

"Just what I say, sir. I quit the mess from this minute."

"Because of—disagreement with your—brother officers, Mr. Ray?"

"No, sir. Because of disagreement with *you!*"

The captain turned again and banged the little hand bell on his desk. The orderly, his khaki suit stiff, starched and glistening, his visible entity fault-

less in his pose and salute, sprang to the doorway in the bamboo partition.

"My compliments to the adjutant and request his presence here at once," said Crabtree, icily.

Then there was an interval of silence. The relative temperament seemed to have changed, Ray still standing at attention, his head still farther back; the captain struggling to subdue his indignation and control his temper, tongue and nerves, yet tapping forcefully with his pencil on the blotting pad, and keeping Ray firmly focused by his glowering eyes.

Then Fethers came and stood uneasily in the doorway. At the first intimation of reprimand to Ray he had found business as far away as possible to the limitations of the big headquarters building. He did not wish to hear a word of it now.

"Come in, captain," said Crabtree, his voice tremulous, but his words professionally weighed and measured. "I wish you to see—or hear—er—the threat this officer has seen fit to—to utter. Now, Mr. Ray, if you will repeat——"

"No threat at all, sir. I simply state that I quit the mess at once——"

"Because of?"

"Because of purely personal disagreement with you, sir."

"An affront, Mr. Ray, to your commanding officer I should never have looked for in your father's son." Crabtree meant to be crushing, yet saw in the stolid

faces of both his juniors that neither was properly impressed.

"I am the affronted one, sir," said Ray, with rising choler. "You have accused me of various offenses, growing out of affairs at the mess. I deny every one. You have accused me of evasion, and even—even a post commander can't do that—without having to answer for it."

"That is sufficient. Leave my office, Mr. Ray. The—er—the adjutant will later call for your sabre."

Sandy Ray whirled on his heel without a word, strode stiffly toward the doorway, re-collected himself, halted, faced the desk again, raised his hand in punctilious salute and then with more deliberation turned again and found himself in the broad and breezy hallway. One or two soldier clerks, writing in the sergeant-major's room, glanced up quickly and took furtive, hurried surveys of the straight-backed, stiff-necked, high-headed young officer stalking out into the sunshine. The orderly on the porch without, stiffened anew, a starched and glistening bit of living statuary. A sentry, guarding a brace of prisoners awaiting action of the summary court, swung his gloved hand to the bolt of his shouldered rifle and got a mechanical return of the soldier greeting. Mrs. Fethers's native nursemaid, taking the children their morning airing and making, for reasons of her own, the circuit of the parade before seeking the beach and the cool breeze from the billows, shot one quick glance

of maidenly approbation on the natty white uniform and the trim form within it, then turned her eyes toward the eastward gate and the adjacent guard house. The sentry had set up a shout and with his Krag at the port was gazing excitedly up the straggling village street without. A corporal and two or three men were running to join him and to stare with hands flattened at the brows. Three or four loungers on the barrack porches heaved up from their chairs on the still sun-sheltered steps, and hastened away to join the comrades at the entrance. But Ray heard nothing and went blindly on. He could think of nothing else just now but that painful interview and his own predicament. He never saw the horseman who rode wearily in and reined up at the adjutant's office. Willing hands strove to aid the rider to dismount and to secure his horse while he went clinking in. "News from Forrest," was the rumor that flew from lip to lip, but Sandy never noted. He had need to see his oldest and best friend before the official visitation so frigidly promised by the captain commanding. That meant "durance vile" and possible prohibition against seeing anybody. He was quivering now with anger and sense of injustice. He wanted Mrs. Blake to hear his side of the case before other rumors reached her, and shocked her as they would be sure to do.

And so he had passed the sentry at the seaward gate and was speeding along the beach road before

the waiting garrison had the first intimation of the contents of Forrest's despatch. He was seated in the shaded gallery, listening to the boom of the breakers and the hiss of the flying spray before the sudden reappearance of the orderly going on the run in quest of the post surgeon, with no time to answer the questions of the paling faces that turned and followed the swift flitting form. He was sitting close to the broad-topped balcony, staring out across the tumbling, white-crested billows, the sea breeze tossing the light curtain about his ears, his close-cropped, yet curly head resting wearily on his hand, switching nervously, mechanically at the snowy trousers with the swagger stick of which Crab so heartily approved, and which so many old officers derided. He sat expectant of Aunt Nannie's coming, yet never heard the light footfall, the swish of the trailing skirt, when a young girl stepped from the darkened hallway to the matting of the veranda, and came straightway, yet shyly, to his side. He turned with sudden start at the half timid "Mr. Ray," with which she accosted him, and then at sight of her the blood rushed to his forehead that but the moment agone had been so pale. His dark eyes filled with distrust as he rose to his feet and stood facing, yet repelling her. There was falter in her voice as she spoke. The few men she had known in the army had been most friendly, at least until the brother she so loved and the soldier he at first so liked had quarreled, she knew not why.

Even Colonel Blake, of whom her father spoke so bitterly, was courtesy itself to her mother and to her. As for Mrs. Blake, who could ever be lovelier than she? Yet here was the young officer whom they had known longest and held as nearest, and he had not a civil word for her who had never consciously offended him. Her young heart swelled in prompt resentment. Grief, peril and dire misfortune combined had not so humbled it that she would tamely tolerate such unwarranted and unwarrantable symptom of antagonism. She had come to him at Mrs. Blake's behest, though she had reason of her own to wish to see him and to see him at once; but the look in his eye first stilled, then stirred her pulses. Forgotten for the instant was her own quest, but not her message. Though her face turned hot, the words were cold as she could make them:

"I did not mean to disturb you. Mrs. Blake could not come at the moment; she is helping mother, but sent me to say please wait and she will be here very shortly." Having said it she turned about and was half way to the hall again before he found wit to say:

"I hope—Mrs. Dean is better."

"Mrs. Dean is little better and Mr. Dean is worse," she answered, one slender foot upon the stone coping, one slender white hand upon the fluted pillar at the doorway. She stood looking squarely at him now, so far as face and eyes were concerned, but it was over a resentful shoulder. She could have burst into tears

as she spoke but for the presence of him who had so rebuffed her. Now she would not for the world permit his seeing there was a soft side to her nature, so far as he was concerned.

"I am more sorry than I can tell you," he stammered; but she raised a hand in protest:

"We know that my poor father had no friends here," she began, tears, despite her effort, springing to her eyes. "He knows it now. He can't get well where he feels that every one is an enemy, and that he's a burden to them." She broke off abruptly. Sliding windows, lattice, shutters, all were open wide to welcome the rush of the strong sea wind, and in spite of its landward sweeps the stirring peal of the bugle could be faintly heard. It was barely half past nine. No drill was held at that hour. No "call" was scheduled until nearly noon, when the first sergeants went for their morning report books, orders and the details for the morrow. Something unusual was happening, and Ray turned in search of his cap. It had disappeared. He hunted about the chairs, the broad-topped table, underneath the bamboo lounge. Again came the call, just a note or two thrilling against the breeze, and then a door opened away back in the wide, airy corridor and Mrs. Blake's steps and voice were audible, and she was calling Sandy. He sprang to meet her, and the girl recoiled to give him way; then quickly, lightly sprang to the railing, saw a white object lying on the flagging beneath; ran,

swift-footed down the stairway and came scurrying back with the missing cap, just in time to hear the close of a brief conversation.

"It was officers' call, I am almost sure," said Mrs. Blake. "Wait." Whereupon she turned to her own room at the south side, while he started again to the gallery.

"It *was* officers' call," panted the girl, "a soldier outside said so. Here's your cap. The curtain must have brushed it from the ledge. Not that way if you are in a hurry," she added, as he mumbled his thanks. "The back stairs and gate!"

"Take you right to your quarters," added Mrs. Blake, reappearing, "and save all that distance. You'll let us know, won't you?" she added as he went bounding down the unfamiliar flight. Two or three native *attachés* of the kitchen were peering through the rear gateway as he brushed them by, and found himself following a pathway that led diagonally to the nipa-built quarters along the west side of the garrison, to the narrow roadway between those occupied by Lieutenant Walker and himself. Two minutes more and he encountered three of the infantry officers hastening forth from the presence he had so recently quitted.

"What's wrong?" he demanded of Walker, first man he met.

"Forrest's had a scrap in the brush. Got to send surgeons. Pitts is killed!"

Ray pushed on into the office. Prince and one or two seniors were still there, Crabtree, all soldierly animation now, giving sharp, clear-cut instructions Ray could not interpose a word or question. Impatient, but subordinate, he stood awaiting his opportunity. From the brief words that fell he gathered that there had been an attack in the jungle on the long-extended column of files, that the field hospital and guard had been surrounded, cut off and badly cut up, the one doctor with the column and two men of the hospital corps slashed to death in the midst of their friends, the sergeant commanding and several men sharing their fate. Crab was sending the post surgeon, one assistant, and everything he could spare under strong escort. It was a three days' march at least and might be more if the natives knew the game It was the Forty-Second's first chance for field work It was the first chance that had come for Ray to join his squadron, now at bay and waiting succor. The instant Crab stopped talking Ray seized his opportunity and began:

"I can be ready in thirty minutes, sir, and quicker if need be. Fethers, will you lend me a horse?"

"You will need no horse, sir," answered Crabtree coldly. "You should be now in, and you are, sir ordered to, your quarters in close arrest."

CHAPTER IX.

That evening the mess assembled in white, but the looks were black and the words were few. Crab dawdled over as on previous occasions, but making no pronounced stop on the way. He had a lesson to administer and it was well to lose no point at the start. It would be just like Prince, his intuition told him, to set the example and convey the signal to take seats if the captain in temporary command gave the faintest excuse for so doing. So long, therefore, as Crab did not actually halt or turn aside, but continued his deliberate and stately progress toward the mess room, the assembled officers could not, without disrespect, seat themselves at table before he had taken his place. All the same he could make them feel his importance, could compel them to wait, and this he did by stopping with his foot almost on the veranda steps and affecting to see something in the bearing of the sentry at the seaward gate.

"Mr. Officer-of-the-day," he called, and Captain Prince, who had shed his sabre in expectation of speedily taking his seat, had to say, "One moment, sir," dive within doors, snap the slings to his waist belt, seize his cap and gloves and come forth again, his

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jaws set like a vise. If there's one thing a captain hates more than another, it is to have another captain for a post commander. Prince knew, when thus officially summoned, he could not appear before Crabtree except in complete equipment. Prince knew that Crabtree was looking for a pretext to rebuke or reprimand him before his fellows, for there had been more harsh words between these two before noontide. Prince knew that now, thanks to Crab's actions of the morning, every man of the mess would side personally against the commander and with him, but he must make no mistake. He came forward with much diginty of mien, but he scented annoyance of some kind and it came. Pointing to the gate, Crabtree began:

"It is most distressing, Captain Prince, to find the instructions of the commanding officer systematically ignored. Now, look at that man. How often must I say to you that members of your company are very slack as sentries?" Every eye, of course, had turned sentryward in the endeavor to see wherein that functionary had incurred the post commander's criticism, but, all unconscious possibly of his condemnation, the sentry was sauntering along the beaten track across the roadway, head, eyes and even rifle muzzle up, apparently alert and vigilant.

"I fail to see anything amiss, sir," said Prince, biting swear words in two with his rasping teeth, but saluting as he spoke.

"Because you are too late, sir, or too—er—indifferent. It is not what *you* saw, but what your commanding officer saw that calls for reprimand. A moment ago, sir, he was slouching across there with the bayonet trailing behind him, and the butt up in the air. Go at once, and properly instruct him as to his duty."

"He's been instructed often, sir," began Prince, flushing hotly. "He knows his duty as well as——" It was on the tip of his tongue to say you or I, but Crab cut him off.

"I said, go at once, sir." And Prince, cursing volubly below his breath, turned and stalked away.

Then, as was his wont, having rasped one of his luckless officers, Crab turned and beamed upon the others with "Come now, gentlemen, let's to dinner," and, rubbing his hands briskly, led the way and jovially called the native steward. "Let's have some Bordeaux, Mariano. Er—set the glasses. We all want some after such a day," then with great gusto turned to the table in general where in silence the white-clad figures were settling to their seats, and, unfolding his napkin, began a semi-confidential monologue on the stirring summons of the day. Dumb, unresponsive and with averted eyes, the mess sipped its soup and gave him what he always claimed, the floor. But even to a greater extent than the day before the mess had its grievance and meant that he should know it. Prince's seat, opposite, being still

vacant, Crab was addressing his remarks especially to "Hasty" Walker and Lieutenant Trott who sat about mid table. Ray's accustomed chair was vacant. The whole mess knew by this time why he had not come and why he probably never again would come, at least so long as Crabtree presided. One after another almost every man of the seven survivors of the little club had been to see, and had striven to console, him in his confinement, and all had come away feeling that Ray had been hard hit, harder hit even than they were, for a singular fact had dawned upon them earlier in the day. Ray, whose troop was in the field, expectant of his coming to assume command, had been cooped up in the post at the very first moment when opportunity presented itself to reach his men—cooped up in close arrest on a charge of disrespect to his commanding officer that the whole mess felt even Crab could not be ass enough to press for trial, and was therefore almost "frivolous and vexatious." They found Ray raging and yet almost ready to do anything Crab might demand rather than lose a chance to join a column in actual contact with the enemy; but when, in his extremity, tramping up and down the narrow confines of his quarters, he had turned suddenly on Prince with the words: "If a written apology will assist, by heaven, I believe I could almost do that!" Prince and they who followed him, who knew well that was exactly what Crab was playing for, shook their heads in solemn

protest. It would only make Crab more unbearable than ever. There wouldn't be any more fighting just now. The *insurrectos,* bushmen, *ladrones,* or whatever they were, would be well content with cutting up the rear guard and would never tackle the main body. He would lose nothing by staying. He would spoil everything by going—on Crabtree's terms. He must stay and stick it out and stand by them, for they, too, had a bitter grievance. Crab had selected three officers and fifty men to fight their way through to the crippled command—the first onerous and honorable bit of duty the Forty-Second had encountered, except possibly Blunt's essay to the southward, and in his selection Crab had systematically ignored the mess and sent married men—Captain Cagger and two rank outsiders. Mrs. Shane, who was shorn of her husband and crying her eyes out in the clasping arms of Mrs. Scammon, refused to be comforted, despite the efforts of the friend who had been so often similarly bereft that she had learned to take such sorrows philosophically.

"A more direct, diabolical, damnable slight to a band of brother officers I never heard of," was Prince's summing up, and as such did the mess regard it, to the end that now, with the going down of the sun upon the long and trying day, they were planning and plotting reprisals. The time had come to strike and strike in earnest.

Therefore did all Crabtree's tentatives fall on stony

ears. Two men turned down their glasses and declined to have them filled. Two other colored almost as red as the wine and, solemnly bobbing their heads to Crabtree's jovial challenge and uplifted glass, sipped at the outer edge of quivering fluid, and then glanced furtively about, shamefaced and unhappy. The glass at Prince's plate was filled, but Prince came not again, and when salad was served Crabtree sent a messman with his compliments and the message that dinner was almost over. The bearer was a bright young Tagalog who had picked up, among other things, an amazing lot of miscellaneous English, but even the mess was startled when he returned with the captain's reply to the effect that so far as he was concerned dinner was entirely over.

"That means another withdrawal," muttered Walker to his next neighbor, and the neighbor nodded. "I'm going, too, quick as I can find board elsewhere." Crabtree looked properly solemn on receipt of the message from his officer of the day; said, with much dignity and deep suggestiveness, "Direct the Commahnding Officer's orderly to report at once," and then turned again to his table mates and elaborately took up the subject where he had left it. "Nothing," said Crabtree, on a previous occasion, "can warrant a gentleman's introducing a jarring or unpleasant note at the dinner table," and so long as no man braved the commanding officer he lived, as he believed, well up to his precepts. Every man felt, however,

that the moment dinner was over the orderly would be sent with instructions for Captain Prince to report at once to the commanding officer, and so it proved.

Meanwhile, Trott and Hikeman, darting in to Blunt's quarters, found Prince and Ray in close conference, while Mrs. Blake's native butler, a Spanish taught servitor of admirable manner, was gathering up and clearing away the remnants of what must have been a very cosey little dinner for two. They saw his white *ropas* disappear in the dusk—not, as expected, along the main driveway toward the sea gate, but through a hole in the wall and by way of a short cut of whose existence they had no previous knowledge.

"Why, I never thought of that before," said Trott. "You can almost see into the colonel's back windows."

"I knew nothing of it—until to-day when the call sounded," answered Ray. "They—it was pointed out to me then. It saves more than three hundred yards, doesn't it?"

"Two yards—back yards, is to three hundred ditto as which is to what?" queried Lieutenant Trott, then added reflectively, "Reckon Walker's the only man to tackle that problem, he's our—figurehead."

And Ray turned slowly and searched the youngster's almost boyish face for hidden meaning. Prince was girding on his sabre. "You're not going yet?" said Sandy, with certain emphasis of importunity. "I wanted to talk with you further."

"Oh, I'll be back, unless he slaps me in arrest, too," answered Prince, flicking a crumb from his trim khaki. "Add my thanks and compliments to Mrs. Blake if you are sending a note to-night. It was most kind of her to include me when making up the dinner. I told her the colonel couldn't get back too soon for any man in the garrison except Crab. She was out taking the air a moment." And as he spoke Prince was edging toward the door.

"Has he sent for you?" queried Ray.

"No, but he will, soon's he's made himself comfortable," answered Prince. "Then he's in mood to make us sweat," and with that he vanished.

"Have a seat, Trott, and tell me how things went at the mess," said Ray, hospitably. He was still smarting and sore under the orders that had confined him to his quarters just at the time he should have been afield. "What will father say or think," was the one thing uppermost in his mind. Of the ultimate result of the difference with his temporary post commander Ray had no dread whatever. He knew that no court would convict him of insubordination, though he might plead guilty to disrespect. He knew that Crab would far rather settle matters out of court, if settlement could be made on anything like his own terms, but now that the command had gone to the field and with it all chance of Ray's going, too, that young gentleman had been making up his mind to fight the

thing through, even if it came to a court, to yield no point, and in plain words to fight it through for his own name and reputation. It was "rough" to have to be placed in arrest just at such a time. He hated to think how it might read in his efficiency report, but that was one of the penalties of being an officer and trying to be a gentleman. Prince, Scammon, even good old Stanhope, the chaplain, all agreed that the provocation had been extreme, that Crabtree had been captious, exacting, suspicious and unjust; that though Ray's words might have savored of insubordination, his act in withdrawing from the mess did not. No officer in the service of the United States was compelled to sit at meat with others who had made the conditions intolerable. Mrs. Blake had lost no time in coming over to see Sandy early in the afternoon, and though she would permit herself no word of censure of the temporary post commander, she did not hesitate to say to Sandy that Captain Crabtree would hardly care to make a court case of the affair, and, knowing the captain, she could not blame Sandy at all, nor should "Uncle Legs" when he came, as come he should right soon, Mrs. Blake would see to that. Meanwhile she meant to see to it that Sandy had every possible comfort. Hence her sending the Spanish bred butler with a most appetizing luncheon and later with a capital dinner for two. The waiter from the mess who arrived, somewhat similarly laden, soon after one o'clock, was met at the doorway by Hilario

and the information that nothing was needed now and nothing would be in the future. The treasurer, in the course of the afternoon, received a note from Mr. Ray, asking for his mess bill and the immediate acceptance of his resignation as a member of the concern. "Shall I give this to Crab?" asked Belden of "Hasty" Walker.

"Not on your spats," answered that unamiable youth. "Wait till we get a boarding place and he thinks it's all blown over, then we'll ram in half a dozen."

"Going over to see Ray?"

"I wouldn't yesterday," said Walker. "He rubbed my fur the wrong way about that bugle business and we split, so to speak, but I'm going now and tell him I'm his friend."

And go he did, after first lighting the lamp in his own quarters and raking out of his trunk, by way of a peace offering, some of the best Manila cigars, though, come to think of it, he couldn't remember having seen Ray smoke. However, he'd take them anyhow. Ray's quarters—Blunt's rather—were just across a narrow roadway. Prince's voice and the clank of his sabre had been audible at the open casement as Walker came strolling home from mess. Now, however, all was silence. A light burned dimly in the sitting room, and, knocking at the open door, Walker waited. No answer. He knocked again, and again there was no response, so, intent

upon his mission, Walker tiptoed lightly in, thinking Ray might be dozing. Both rooms were tenantless. The door to the side veranda stood wide open. Walker went on through, and at the west end of the little porch could just dimly see his man. Ray stood with one hand upon the wooden pillar, bending eagerly forward, half crouching and peering at some object in the shadows beyond. Following his gaze, Walker, too, bent and stared, for a vague, slender shape in woman's garments was hastening along a pathway that, passing close beside his own quarters, led almost directly to a gateway in the rear wall of Blake's courtyard. The figure vanished among the deep shadows along the wall, but in the oppressive silence of the gathering night, broken only by dull, distant boom of the rising tide upon the shore, both officers heard the click of the iron latch, heard the creak of rusty hinges, heard the gate stealthily closed and bolted. Then Ray slowly turned, and with trouble in his eyes, unexpectedly faced his unlooked for visitor. There was a moment's hesitation, a suggestive pause, then

"Who on earth was that?" said Walker.

"You know—better than I," said Ray.

CHAPTER X.

When Crabtree, in his eagerness to serve the field column, sent his post surgeon and certain of the hospital corps, he stripped Camp Boutelle to its medical skin and left at least one important case to care for itself. When Dr. Scammon, in his zeal to reach the wounded and his grief at the fate of his young friend and associate, hastened away on the trail of the cavalry, he tarried long enough to pay a parting visit to Mrs. Blake and have a final look at his unwelcome and bothersome patient.

"There's really nothing the matter with Dean beyond the effect of drugs, liquor and a bad scare, possibly a shock that would hardly have staggered a man in normal condition. He's suffering now from reaction, and it serves him right. But this house is no place for him. He's a nuisance to you and a menace to his wife. Captain Crabtree and I agree that he should be moved. We have a capital sergeant at the hospital and a spare room. There he can be treated, nursed and controlled if need be. Here he may any moment take a notion to get up and raid the premises. Mrs. Blake, you must make her consent to it."

"It seems a brutal thing to do, doctor. Suppose

he does get up. What have we to fear? With the attendant for one and our old Michael for another and the officers' quarters within call from the back windows, he can be easily managed. She will not rest away from him."

"She will never get well anywhere near him," said Scammon, decidedly. "Let me see Gertrude a moment."

And so, pallid, slender, sad-eyed, Gertrude came and submissively followed the doctor to the seaward gallery and there looked up into his strong, soldierly, bearded face and listened. Scammon never looked more sturdy and reliable than when in campaign attire, and, as Mrs. Scammon ruefully admitted, was never happier than when on campaign. It was then long after noon of an exciting day. The news of the ambuscade had come before ten. The infantry, of course, had marched away before twelve, followed speedily by the jogging little party of pony riders—three hospital men and three guards, some leading, some prodding their reluctant pack animals. Scammon, however, had much to attend to and, with a single orderly, was to canter away after them in time to join the party by nightfall at their bivouac some twenty miles to the north. The road was open and fairly safe, and early at dawn they would resume the march, eastward now, and by crooked, tortuous trail up and into the heavily wooded range, following a rushing mountain stream that was at times a torrent.

The start was made on a Tuesday. By Thursday evening the relief should reach the suffering wounded, and Forrest, who had been scouting the valleys about the Cayan, and was probably fuming with impatience to push ahead, would then be free to cut loose and be after the renegades. The courier said they had gone northward toward Bontoc and "there was a hell's mint of 'em." It seems that it was while Forrest's troopers were out exploring the innumerable trails wriggling through the bamboo and cogon, and branching in every direction, that a sudden rush had been made upon Dr. Pitt's little field hospital, where he with his few assistants were caring for half a dozen troopers, temporarily dismounted by minor maladies, cuts and scratches. The sergeant and the guard had been vigilant, but what could they see or hear in such a jungle. They had fought manfully and some were still alive when the rearmost of Forrest's troopers came clattering back to the sound of the firing. But besides the young surgeon, half a dozen good men and true had gone to their last account and all Camp Boutelle was plunged in mourning. "Thank God for one thing," Captain Prince had said most piously this second, this Wednesday morning, "it'll bring the old man back the moment he gets the news, and we'll have no more of this damned Cockney nonsense."

And the same thought, expressed in many a varying form and embellished with more or less descriptive and rejoiceful profanity, had gone through the garri-

son. The bachelors had spoken it under their breath at the breakfast table. The households along officers' row had given voice to it at every meeting. Mrs. Blake even whispered it hopefully to Mrs. Dean. It was one thing Mr. Walker meant to say to Mr. Ray when he made that evening call of condolence, but what Mr. Ray said to Mr. Walker had blocked further amenities of any kind. A fierce quarrel that began at once in wordy charge and countercharge, bade fair to change to blows when Prince, bolting in again, with Trott again at his back, put summary stop to proceedings and sent Walker, raging, to the right about with the parting shot that Ray should hear from him in the morning. Yet neither officer, in response to the captain's demand at the time or Stanhope's paternal questioning later, would give satisfactory explanation as to the cause.

From her interview with Dr. Scammon, Miss Dean, with swimming eyes, went straightway to her mother's room, while the doctor himself remounted at the westward entrance and trotted back to hospital. Half an hour later he was on the road to Santa Lucia and the north. Possibly the soothing methods he directed the attendants to adopt—possibly the coming of the hospital sergeant, armed with a needle pointed little instrument—had reduced the patient to reason. Possibly a ten-minute, low-toned talk from Gertrude's lips had wrought the change, but there was neither violence in language nor in look when

toward four o'clock Amos Dean was lifted from his bed and borne to hospital, not conspicuously through the main gate and past the mess and officers' quarters, but clear around the clump of woods and a tangle of tropic vegetation to the north of Colonel Blake's, clear around the north side of the quadrangle, and so by the rear door into the big, roomy hospital and there in a quiet nook, they bade him rest and have no fear. Messengers should come to him from Mrs. Dean every possible hour, and Gertrude, the darling one should visit him before night. It is suspected that only by yielding on certain points involving a more gradual stoppage of accustomed stimulants did Dr. Scammon succeed in bringing Dean to terms, but those who best knew the man said there was another influence, his love for that gentle daughter.

And now was Captain Crabtree between the horns of more than one dilemma. Abroad his men-at-arms were gone at his behest, Blunt three days out to the southward and never a word from him since he marched from ruined San Sulpicio, Captain Cagger away to the north with two subalterns and forty fighting men, and with never a hope of his getting back with the wounded inside of a week—one doctor killed, one "contract" ditto in the field, one major ditto, the right arm of the commanding officer, the post surgeon, also gone to the aid of the survivors across the range! It left the patients at the post, luckily few in number and none of them dangerous,

to the care of the hospital sergeant, a faithful and intelligent man. Cagger would bring the wounded back all right, said Crab, but all this was digression from his purpose. Crab had counted on making a name for himself as a most energetic and level-headed post commander. Blake's sending Forrest to the hills was an inspiration; his subsequent going to Manila a godsend. It was opportunity Crabtree long had craved. He had been figuring how fine it would look in the papers the moment the wires were again working. "Camp Boutelle, October 29th.—Courier just in reports stirring engagement between Major Forrest's squadron —d Cavalry and ladrone bands in mountains toward Bontoc. We have succeeded in clearing the valleys north and south and scattering the bands in every direction. Many important captures. Forrest in hot pursuit. Lieutenant Blunt, whom I sent with thirty men to clear the Dagupan road and repair wire, has succeeded in restoring confidence and communication. Full particulars by mail.—Crabtree, Commanding."

But he now had no really good news to send, as Forrest had no way of sending it, had he the news. Through native whisperings and rumors he was beginning to hear of troublous times for Blunt's little force. There might well be more of disaster than success to report, and the general commanding at Manila was getting captious and crotchetty, said Crabtree. At last accounts he was forever wanting

to know why. Things looked ominous outside of the post and things were ominously squally within.

To begin with, Ray's resignation from the mess had been tendered, as Crabtree ascertained by questioning, and it was dawning upon that self-centered commanding officer that this might be only the entering wedge of an outgoing body. Prince, long time Crabtree's friend and comrade, had taken sides and supper with Ray and declined to return to the fold. The "confidential" sergeant who had been doing detective work, told Crabtree that everybody said Mr. Walker was the man who played the bugle, but nobody could or would prove it. The sergeant said that Mr. Walker, Mr. Trott and Mr. Hikeman as well as Captain Prince, had been striving to find somebody willing to run a mess for them. The wives ofthe post quartermaster sergeant, the commissary sergeant, hospital sergeant had all been approached, and Mrs. Cooney, the matron first mentioned, were reported seriously considering the proposition. If that scheme went through and five of the eight mess members seceded and started one of their own, no matter how humble, 'twould be better than the pomp, ceremony and stiff-necked regulations of this usurper of the throne. It would break up the Boutelle Club and leave Crabtree with only two callow and inoffensive subs to do his bidding, and this fell far short of his ambition.

At guard mounting next morning Prince again had to face his commander, an ordeal from which he

shrank, but no one who saw would dream it. The sound of voices raised in anger had broken in upon the interview of the previous evening before Crabtree had fairly warmed up to his work, but Prince knew that the rasping was merely postponed. He had therefore donned his best uniform and best manner, reported in most soldierly fashion, but never opened his mouth except in answer to direct questions. Crabtree looked vainly over the guard report book in search of something for which to rebuke and annoy the officer of the day, but the report was accurate and precise. Prince and his credentials were beyond criticism, so far as the book was concerned. Crabtree saw he must fall back on the doings of yesterday, and fall he did, and as Prince later described it, "fell down." Prince told his brother captain and emergency commanding officer that he declined to listen to frivolous and vexatious charges, and that he, Captain Crabtree, had erred gravely in the treatment accorded Lieutenant Ray, and that he, Prince, would be a witness for Ray if the case were ever investigated. In less than three minutes Crabtree's soul was in arms and eager for the fray. All this, to his mind, was tantamount to utter defiance to the commanding officer.

And so, as luck would have it, at the very moment that gentle-minded soldier of the cross, good, gray-haired Stanhope, sallied forth to see Crabtree, after a long conference with Ray, now bitterly distressed in

mind and ready to make any honorable concession to gain his release and the route to his regiment, Crabtree was hardening his heart in the lust for vengeance. Stanhope came, bearing the olive branch and suing for peace. Crab met him with charges of conspiracy on part of the mess, with Prince and Ray at the bottom of the mischief, and followed this with an intimation that Stanhope was something more than a spiritual advisor. The chaplain was fairly stunned.

"It is the first time my commanding officer has ever accused me of——" began Stanhope, "and my cloth —to a member of the Church of England—should have protected me."

Crab flushed hotly and anew. Was he never to get the upper hand? Was he never to silence these recalcitrants? Stanhope's riposte was more than telling, for in his loyalty to every custom of his native land, Crabtree had often declaimed upon the influence of the English service upon the officers and men, the field altar, drum built and covered with the Union Jack, the officiating priest in cap and canonicals. He had even contemplated church parade as a possibility at Boutelle, a public service in the open, and in accordance with the stately and impressive ritual of the Anglican faith, but here now was even the meek and lowly chaplain turning like the trodden worm and daring to upbraid him. If Crab had had half as much sense as he had grit and determination, he might have been an ideal commander, but, in his

wrath at finding his every move obstructed, and almost his every officer obstructive, he blundered on, fighting with all his might and backing himself to win, as his bull dog countrymen won their occasional battle, "by main strength and stupidity."

Stanhope had come to plead for Ray, and left with the conviction that he might have to do battle for himself. Later in the day, with his points carefully reduced to writing, he had called at the commanding officer's quarters in quest of an interview. The orderly went in with his card and Stanhope waited on the veranda in the shade of the hanging curtains. At first the orderly's half-timid tapping at some inner doorway met with no response. It was one of Crabtree's tenets that all persons about the post should await the commanding officer's pleasure, and that in due regard for his dignity that personage should not be easy of access. There was presently sound of splashing, and later an impatient, "Well, what now, orderly?"

"A caller, sir—the chaplain."

"The who?" Crab had distinctly heard, but it was well to let the chaplain feel that the mention of his presence and office did not impress the commanding officer as anything calling for immediate recognition.

"The chaplain, sir—Captain Stanhope." Was it possible that the orderly dared to even slightly emphasize that "captain?"

"Not captain, sir! That is merely a matter of rela-

tive rank, sir—something to fix pay and allowance. Only the fighting force have military titles, sir. Remember that!" And indeed it was to be remembered as one of Crabtree's idiosyncracies, that never, when he could avoid it, would he address or refer to "officers of the departments" save as paymaster, quartermaster or doctor.

"Yes, sir, the chaplain, sir," answered the orderly, with proper meekness. Then more splashing and finally—

"Er—ah—my compliments to the—ah—chaplain. Say the commahnding officer is in the bahth and er—ah—will send for him when he wishes to converse."

And with this for his answer, never waiting for its repetition by the orderly, the good old gentleman turned away with a sigh, and went sadly on to Ray's, finding Prince at the gate.

"Sure he didn't say he was *bah*thing?" demanded Prince, in high dudgeon, when Stanhope, half ruefully, half humorously told his tale. "I've been that fellow's friend a dozen years and found him a good soldier and a square man. It does seem as though you never get to know the real calibre of an officer until he steps into command."

"It is Mr. Ray's discomfiture that troubles me," said Stanhope. "Every hour he is kept here now is like—disgrace to him."

"By jove," said Prince, with clinching teeth. "I'm

going to make one more try. Come what may, Crab's got to be brought to his senses!"

And so, bristling with indignation, with rankling sense of indignity and injustice, the captain started on his diplomatic mission, and every man with half a head could have told what would come of it.

CHAPTER XI.

It was along toward four o'clock that afternoon that Mrs. Blake, following the short cut, left the pathway back of Walker's and came around to the shaded front of Ray's quarters, only to find the veranda deserted. She was vaguely troubled over the story that had come to her about the quarrel between the two young officers, a something that assumed in her mind rather more consequence at the time than the exasperating and distressing misadventures that had befallen the squadron. She had heard of the affair through Mrs. Scammon and Mrs. Shane, who had called for comfort and the sea breezes during the morning, and the chaplain with his devoted wife, coming to see how they could serve her guest and patient, Mrs. Dean, corroborated the story, yet could throw no light upon the cause of the trouble. She was sorely worried, too, about the way matters were going in garrison. So far as she could judge of the various stories, Captain Crabtree was antagonizing everybody and a general break-up was imminent at the mess. She was anxious, too, for Gertrude, who seemed drooping and ill, yet with rare pluck and persistence divided her time between the invalid mother

under their roof and the semi-stupefied father at the hospital. Something beside anxiety on account of her parents, and grief on account of her brother, was surely weighing upon that gentle young heart—something Mrs. Blake could neither fathom nor alleviate. Twice she had found Gertrude in tears, alone on the veranda. The more she saw of the child the closer was she drawn to her, and also, to a certain extent, she found herself attracted by the mother. There was about them an indefinable something that told of better days and higher breeding, a gentleness, a refinement that was almost incomprehensible in the wife and daughter of a man of Dean's unwholesome personality. The devotion of the girl to the invalid, her tireless soothing, her ceaseless care and watchfulness and self-abnegation were remarkable in one so young and fair and fragile. Moreover, with all her refinement of mind and manner, it must be owned that Mrs. Dean was exacting, querulous, even selfish, and yet with infinite tact and patience Gertrude cheered and served her, smiling bravely through the stifling hours, ignoring, playfully, every little bit of petulance, fondling and caressing when the sorrowing creature gave way to the burden of her many griefs. Time and again Mrs. Blake would send Gertrude from the sick room with injunction to rest and sleep, but the faintest sound would bring her back, all simulated cheeriness and confidence.

Before they had been forty-eight hours in her care

Mrs. Blake had lived over in memory years of her own maidenhood, years when she, too, a slip of a girl, almost alone and unaided had watched over a wayward father, shunned by many even as Dean was shunned to-day, and had taken Gertrude into her heart of hearts as she might have taken her other self, as she might have held and cherished the beloved child lost so many a long year ago.

And in the midst of all her cares and perplexities Gertrude saw this and marveled, saw this and almost shrank, for even now when the guest, the beneficiary of this most generous and charitable and kindly woman, it was her fate to have to play a part, to conceal a crime, to blind that gentle friend, if possible, to a misdeed of which she was sore ashamed, and the consciousness of which stood like the angel with the flaming sword between her and the heaven of such a woman's love and sympathy.

And so, into the life that seemed so placid and unvexed when her colonel was hurried away, there had come to Mrs. Blake a multitude of worries, of which Sandy Ray, son of her oldest and most devoted army friends, was by no means the least. She had come in search of him this sunny afternoon, and the quarters seemed abandoned. No one was visible on either front or side veranda, no one was in the sitting room, no one lay in siesta upon the big four poster. It could be plainly seen through the wide open casement from which the curtain had been swept aside. Across the

narrow roadway Walker's bungalow seemed equally desolate. Beyond, along the row, a white skirt showed in the swaying hammock under one or two of the broad, nipa awnings. Two officers were in conversation on the Fethers' veranda, where Mrs. Fethers sat listening with upturned face. The orderly was missing in front of Captain Crabtree's, which meant that that officer was elsewhere, possibly at the office, and if so Sandy might be there, sent for to receive some further admonition or rebuke at the hand of this strange combination of soldiership and absurdity. Mrs. Blake decided to wait awhile, and took a chair near the northward window, that which gave light and air to the sitting room on that side. Two minutes later she heard the patter of bare feet on the India matting. Somebody had come from the servants' premises into Sandy's bedroom, and, never doubting that it was Blunt's stolid, sphinx-like servitor, Hilario, she called his name. Dead silence followed. She called again and there was no reply. A board creaked. Something snapped like bamboo. She thought she heard a scurry on the back porch, but an immediate and careful search showed all rooms empty and, from the back steps, along the row in either direction not a soul was in sight.

Turning again to the front, annoyed and mystified, she was about to summon the officers at Fethers when, coming swiftly from the direction of the adjutant's office, looking neither to right nor left, but walking

stiffly, angrily, hurriedly, came Sandy himself, and she waited. At sight of her his face brightened just an instant. Then with lips that twitched and trembled uncontrollably he stood before her, took her hand in both his own and tried to speak. She saw his agitation—saw that he was struggling hard against an unmanly break down. "Wait a minute," she said, reassuringly. "We'll come round to this later. Tell me first, where is Hilario? I thought it was he I heard in your room just now, but——"

"There wasn't anybody there," said Sandy, promptly. "Hilario went to town early this morning. You know he's looking after Walker as well as me. Trott came over late last night to explain. You know—I 'spose you've heard—that Walker and I had a row."

"I did hear it, Sandy," she answered, gently, still studying his flushed and troubled face, "and I won't ask you why just now. Let me tell you first that there *was* somebody in your room—some barefooted somebody that stole away when I called Hilario. You cannot be too careful about these native servant boys. Have you lost nothing lately?"

He had, but how could he tell her? He had lost it under her roof, and, as he believed, at the hands of her guest, this girl who by night was following Walker into the dark aisles of the grove, this girl whom he had seen speeding through the dusk from

Walker's door to that hidden gateway in Blake's back wall.

"I haven't anything worth stealing," said he. "The little money I have—had—was left in bank. I shall be strapped until pay day—had to give a check for my mess bill. That's one thing Crabtree is raving about now. The caterer's perfectly willing to take it—says he will need to send money to Manila, and the check is just what he wants, but, why, Aunt Nannie, this man is acting like a lunatic. He and Prince, now, have had a racket, just when it looked——"

"Tell me that later, Sandy," she interposed, noting again the threatening symptoms. "You had nearly seventy dollars the other day. You told me so when I warned you to keep everything double locked."

"I've—been lending," and the flush deepened.

"But wasn't that a check?" she asked. "Mr. Blunt said so."

"You don't mean Bl—he *told!*"

"Mr. Blunt!" and Aunt Nannie's laugh was good to hear. There had hardly been a smile on the face of Camp Boutelle all the livelong day. "There never was so frank and outspoken a creature about his own affairs, at least. He almost shouted that if it hadn't been for you a note of his would go to protest. I wish we might hear from him," and again the anxious look returned. "Perhaps Hilario will bring tidings. These people are like our Indians in the way of getting news."

"But they're bigger liars. You can't believe anything they tell you," said Sandy, eager to divert her from the money question. "Walker's *muchacho* skipped with much of *his* cash ten days ago, and these others all swore he'd only gone to his grandmother's funeral."

"Did Mr. Trott say why Hilario was wanted to go to town?" she suddenly asked.

Trott did say and it was just exactly what Sandy wished to avoid telling. He reddened still more and stumbled hopelessly. She saw it and pursued.

"It isn't idle curiosity, Sandy. It is something I need to know and have reason to ask. Was it not for Gertrude Dean?"

It was, and Ray could not and would not tell her. Even now his nerves were tingling as they began the night before when Trott came, in three hours after the quarrel, with a note from Walker. Sandy, looking for a challenge or a demand or something truculent from his late antagonist, read with open-eyed astonishment. In few words Walker managed to say that Hilario was the only one who could be trusted to go and deliver a message and bring a package for Miss Dean, and in spite of misunderstandings, past, present or future, Mr. Walker asked Mr. Ray's consent to Hilario's going. Then that girl *had* been to see Walker. She, Aunt Nannie's guest and *protégée*, and now Aunt Nan "needed to know"—"had reason to ask" about her.

What a predicament for a man like Sandy Ray, who somehow couldn't lie, for now Aunt Nannie stood gazing at him, with wonderment in her eyes. He thanked heaven for the sight of Fethers, belted, booted and spurred, coming tramping up the steps. Mrs. Blake turned instantly at sound of the sabre and paled at sight of the official visitor. What new trouble did this portend for the son of her fondest friend?

"I'm sorry, Ray," began the adjutant, at once, "but the commanding officer directs me to say that you have his ultimatum and must decide before retreat. Mrs. Blake, if the colonel doesn't get back before I'm a day older, I'll be fit for nothing short of bedlam. Twice I have begged him to relieve me and make one of his own people post adjutant, but he won't, and it's —it's—well it's too much for *me!*"

"What is the ultimatum, Sandy?" she quietly asked.

"Demands that I shall appear before the mess and publicly apologize to him, acknowledge that I was wrong throughout, and ask to be restored. Then he'll think about letting me go to my troop. I've written him everything—anything a gentleman could say or ought to say, but he slings it back. Come, let me show you." And he turned impulsively and led through the front room to his desk in the second, the bedroom, Mrs. Blake and the adjutant following. A number of papers had fluttered to the floor, but, pick-

ing up an official envelope from a corner of the table, Ray drew forth the folded contents, duly briefed and endorsed: The commanding officer returned the within communication with the remark that, "inferentially, the methods and policy of the present administration are reflected upon herein. When the writer can submit a plea, couched in respectful and temperate language, it will be given all proper consideration."

"There isn't a disrespectful word in it!" cried poor Sandy, "and he knows it, but he's in a fury because Prince butted in with his opinion of Crabtree's position, and, if his old friend falls out with him, and his adjutant begs to be relieved, and nobody else will go near him, and the mess is broken up, he must see and does see that he's gone too far, but, knowing that I'm ready to do almost anything to get away to my troop, he hopes to wring this admission out of me. I *can't* do it, Aunt Nannie. I *won't* do it! and I'll bet the regiment will say I was right!"

But Aunt Nannie's eyes and thoughts had wandered from the paper in her hand to the rude field desk, perched on its travel-stained box at the window side. The front, which hinged at the bottom and, by opening outwards and downwards formed a writing shelf, was as Sandy had left it, up and closed, but one or two papers protruded from the crack at the side. One or two had fallen on the floor and in the semi-darkness of the shaded room had been unnoticed.

"Did you lock that in a hurry, Sandy?" she asked, moving slowly thither, leaving Crab's stately endorsement face downward on the table.

"It hasn't been open to-day," said Sandy. "I wrote my appeal in the other room. Why——"

With that, his cheek paling a trifle, he picked out his keys and applied one to the lock. It yielded grudgingly.

"Rusty," said Sandy. "Lots of rain this last summer. Needs a drop of oil, but—it works!" And with that the lock snapped, the lid came down, two or three papers fell to the floor, and the inner surface came to light, enriched with loose memoranda and letters.

"By Jove!" cried he, "you're right, Aunt Nannie. Some one's been raiding this—to-day."

Hurriedly he pulled out first one drawer, then another. Cardcase, diary, note books in one, check book and, underneath it, the cover of the ravished pocket book in another, apparently untouched. "You scared her—*him*—off before much damage was done," he went on, excitedly, turning over the little packet, letters, note, envelopes, etc., as though in search of some one in particular.

"Where'd you keep your money?" asked Fethers, in growing excitement. More than one story of sneak thieving had come of late to the office. "Wasn't that your only *portemonnaie?*" and a nod at the hurriedly closed drawer, wherein lay the check book,

told that the quick eye of the adjutant had caught sight of the little pocket case.

"Yes, but it's been empty two or three days," said Sandy, desperately.

"Then, Sandy," said Mrs. Blake, and she spoke with the slow deliberation of one on whom unwelcome light is gradually, disagreeably dawning, "that accounts for the post office receipts and things I picked up under our stairway yesterday. They were yours, and that portemonnaie was emptied at my house."

CHAPTER XII.

It was late that night when Hilario reappeared, silent and inscrutable as ever. He blew in, as Ray expressed it, just as that officer was going to bed. He answered the rapid volley of questions with stolid shake of the head to each. Had he heard anything of Lieutenant Blunt's command? Had anything been heard of the marauders? Had there been any further trouble at San Sulpicio? There were other questions Ray would have liked to ask and other things he much wished to know, but they concerned the Deans, and, as he might have said, were none of his business. Yet under the circumstances they might well be made his business. Surely, for instance, he had a right to inquire what had become of his money, and it had transpired, in the course of the evening and conversation with Trott, that one thing Hilario took with him was money, and Trott was betting that neither Hilario nor the money nor its equivalent, whatever that might be, would ever be seen at Boutelle again. Yet taps had hardly sounded when the sentry at the seaward gate yelled loud for the corporal, and there, hat in hand, standing imperturbably at attention, was Hilario. A fellow Tagalog had

half sailed, half paddled him much of the nine miles from town in his outrigger canoe, riding the lazy billows like a sea bird. Hilario had hoped to reach the gate, he said, before the sentries began challenging and had just missed it. The corporal took him to the officer of the day, half the population of officers' row hailing him in inquisitive succession, and then he was permitted to go and deliver his package and report to Lieutenant Walker, who damned him for his delay and bade him take the package and himself by the shortest route to Miss Dean at Colonel Blake's. It was nearly quarter of eleven when he came pit-a-patting in to see if his other master needed him—or anything, and by eleven he had been dismissed for the night. As a result of conference between the officers, and at Mrs. Blake's request, nothing was said to Hilario about the desk. The keys to these government affairs were accessible to many. Every company had its field desk, though none of them took theirs to such a field as was found in Northern Luzon. There were others at regimental, battalion and squadron headquarters. Several officers had "accumulated" at least one, though for individual purposes they were more cumbersome than useful. There were a dozen ways in which a would-be pilferer could possess himself of the key, and at least one keyless way of opening the best of them. But what puzzled Ray and Fethers was that nothing of value had been taken from the desk. Indeed, there was little of

value in it. Postage stamps in oiled silk folders and some fine photographs, maps, etc., were almost the only things that could be converted into cash, yet the marauder had pulled out papers, letters and the miscellaneous contents of the drawers as though searching for something to reward his efforts. The trunk with its heavy spring lock had apparently not been tampered with, nor was it possible to say at what time this bit of cracksmanship had been accomplished. Probably before Mrs. Blake's advent and soon after Ray was summoned to the presence of the post commander, for the mysterious visitor whose entrance she had heard took flight at sound of her voice without having had time to overhaul anything.

It had been a trying—an exciting—day to Ray, for, to fill up the evening, there had come three conspirators to say that on the morrow they, too, would resign from the mess, Mrs. Sergeant Cooney being now ready to undertake temporarily to board them, and thus would Crabtree be left almost alone. It was conjectured that he would declare the mess closed until the return of the field column, that he would "board around" as best he could or live on his individual mess kit. Trott said that Crabtree could be relied on to endeavor to rule them out of the mess should they propose to rejoin when, once again, Major Forrest was restored to his own. Then with well meant but mistaken zeal, Trott and Hikeman had been striving to patch up a truce between Ray and

Walker, meeting with precious little encouragement from the one and much that was objurgation from the other. Neither man would budge an inch, and neither would give the faintest inkling of the cause. "It is purely a personal matter," said Ray, "and no one's business but his and mine. If Mr. Walker wants anything from me he knows how to get it—at least he should know, if he knows anything—reputable." As for Mr. Walker himself he swore so at Hilario that even that stolid and unimpressionable servitor well nigh changed color. Walker had been in a nasty mood for two days anyhow, said Trott, and he almost wished that Ray *had* punched his head.

In spite of all these distractions, however, Ray was soon asleep, and long before midnight all the garrison, save the guard, seemed wrapped in slumber. Even at the post hospital the lights burned dim, and there was barely a movement on part of the few attendants. The third relief marched like noiseless specters from the guard house at 11:30 and, having changed sentries at the storehouses, stables and east gate, started along the south front and on the side of the straggling little native village to pick up Numbers Four and Five and then, turning northward at the beach, to look up Number Six at the seaward front. It was a very still night; the light sea breeze had died away and only plashing wavelets spent their puny strength upon the sand. Corcoran, corporal in charge, was saying to Number Five of the second relief as they

turned the corner and trudged along toward the gate, that it was his belief they had come just in time to prevent his falling asleep on post. "Ye were more asleep than awake when we stumbled on ye, Five, and ye know it," said he. Then, as they came within hailing distance of the gate, "and so's Number Six, bedad, for there's devil a sign of him." Square up to the whitewashed portal they marched, and still there came no challenge, yet Six was one of their most reliable men, and his call the hour before, when summoning the corporal to greet Hilario, rang out clear and strong. Now he was nowhere in sight, and to Corcoran's "Where are you, Six?" there came no response whatever.

"Stay you here, fellers!" said he. "May be he's heard something over by the colonel's," and, with his rifle at trail, the corporal ran nimbly up the shell walk to where the huge bulk of the Spanish house stood black against the stars of the northern sky. Blake would not have a sentry in front of his quarters. "Let Number Six scout up here if he hears anything amiss," said he, "but otherwise his post is at the gate."

Not until Corcoran was almost under the overhanging gallery did he stumble on his man. Seated on a stone, his head tilted forward on his breast, his rifle lying on the sands beside him, breathing heavily and apparently sound asleep, was the missing sentry. Corcoran grabbed him by the collar and shook him

hard. "Wake, you loon!" he hoarsely, angrily railed at him. "Here's the whole damn relief not fifty yards away, and what am I to tell 'em? What the hell d'ye mean by squattin' right here at the colonel's? Wake, Andy, I say!" For the man seemed strangely, stupidly dazed and torpid. "Wake or I'll kick the hide off ye! Here, take your gun and—shall I trow ye in the bay or will ye wake wid a batin'?" And now in his wrath Corcoran was cuffing his fellow soldier, who stumbled feebly about, mumbling inarticulate protest. "What the hell's the matter wid ye, Brewster?" was the next question, anxious now, for this could have been no natural sleep. "Sure *you* haven't been drinkin'!" But Private Brewster could only lift a nerveless, wandering hand, then incontinently doubled up and squatted "tumblewise," as Mulvaney would have it, again. It was plain that he could not walk unaided.

Corcoran hurried back and called two of his men, and with the others gazing after them startled, returned at the double, and between them heaved Brewster to his feet and then shuffled him along. Posting Number Six of the third relief, the corporal bade them lead their semi-dazed comrade to the silent mess building, where there stood a tank of fresh water. "Douse him well with it," said he, "an' jump him round a bit. Sure 'twill never do to let the captain see him like this. Stay wid him, you two, Pratt

and Roberts. The rest of ye fall in. I'll be back soon as I've relieved Seven and Eight."

Then once again the relief trudged away in the dim starlight, the two file leaders, Numbers Seven and Eight, had started to turn west toward the gate again, but Corcoran checked them. "We'll take the short cut across," said he, "now that we're inside. Break step and go soft." They were across the shell road now and picking an easy way through the stunted shrubbery and sandy hummocks that lay back of the west row of officers' quarters. To their left, as they hurried along, was the thicket of palm; beyond that the massive, breast-high wall that stretched from the gate to the enclosure in which stood the handsome old Spanish house, now assigned to Colonel Blake. To their left front as they zig-zagged through the grove they could catch an occasional glimpse of its black and bulky outline, not a spark visible on the eastward façade or among the few outbuildings where some of the native families slept. To their right was the light-built row of story and a half cottages, mostly pine, bamboo and nipa, the houses of the officers of the garrison, with here and there a night lamp glowing dim, dull and red in the general gloom. Presently they emerged from the shadows and found themselves on more open ground, with the high back wall of the colonel's "compound" directly at their left hand. Another moment and they stumbled upon a faint pathway, crossing diagonally their line of direction,

and again the leaders would have edged off as though to follow this, rather than essay the dark depths of another grove now looming between them and the northward stars, but Corcoran, in gruff whisper, headed them on. Just at its edge, Number Eight kicked at something white, and tangled his "hiking" boot in the folds, which old Number Four, two paces to his rear, stooped and gathered in and clung to in stupid curiosity. Corcoran was leading them and looking for the best way through this gloomy patch. Not until after they had managed, with some switching and scratching and muttered expletive, to tear a way through and find a skirting roadway on the north side, did Corcoran straighten out his little command. Then Number Seven's impatient challenge was heard, and when the relief halted and the corporal went forward to give the countersign, Number Four of the old relief, a young German-American, Steinmann by name, had a chance to examine his prize, Number Three curiously assisting. Then Number Seven was called up, the relief bustled on, the relieved Number Seven fell in at the rear and forthwith began cursing everybody concerned for keeping him over time on post. He was a broken sergeant, a man of many years' service, some of them valuable, but the combination of a vile temper with viler native liquor had led to his undoing. He wouldn't "let up on that" as Corcoran mildly suggested. No friendly non-commissioned officer fancies having to deal with

a fellow striper who has lost his warrant. He growled the more as the relief went tramping along and the faint lights in the hospital building came in view, and then, from under the shadow of its westward wing came the hail of Number Eight, and Corcoran half turned to the right, shoving the file leaders with him with a thrust of a sturdy elbow. "Halt! Who is there?" again came the challenge, and this time Corcoran responded with the order to his men, and the rifle butts came down with a thump on the sodden ground.

But now there was no prompt relief of the sentry. He had a tale to tell and the others lounged impatient, while, in the dim shadows ahead, the old and new sentries with the corporal held unusual conference. It was the disgruntled Number Seven who furnished the first explanation. "Awe, come on out o' that, Corcoran," he called. "Sure what's past is past and ye can't betther it. Ould Jimjams is gone an' it's none of our business. I'm dead wid loss of sleep, anyhow."

Corcoran was a little man, but an Irishman and plucky. He came back toward the relief instead of giving his orders at the sentry's side. "You'll be quiet now, Dawson," said he, "or I'll find a way to make you. The time you should have talked was when that lunatic tore through the window and ran up to your post. You were the last man to see him. Why didn't you shout when that rum-suckin' thief

came tumbling onto your post? *That* was the time to talk! Come on, fellers. We've got something to tell 'em at the guard house and no time to lose."

He had hoped to find no one higher than the sergeant there, but even in the dark Corcoran knew the soldierly form standing lonely near the saluting gun. He had hoped to be permitted to dismiss the relief without reference to the absence of the three men, and to explain that matter to the sergeant later. But there stood Lieutenant Trott, the officer-of-the-day, and there was no help for it. There, too, oddly enough, in earnest conversation with Trott, was Captain Prince. Now, what could that portend?

"Three absent, sir; Two, Three and Six," he reported, as the sergeant stepped forward to inspect.

"Why?" demanded Trott, coming impatiently forward. "Had he, too, heard?" thought Corcoran. "Why—and what became of them?"

"Six is sick, sir. Left him with Two and Three to look after him over by the mess, sir. I was goin' to fetch 'em in now." And still the relief stood waiting, patient and controlled, yet eager to dismiss.

"Did you leave word at hospital as you came by?" inquired the officer.

"No, sir," hesitated Corcoran. "There was no one to leave word with. The hospital sergeant and attendant are both out hunting up a patient that broke loose."

"Dean?" demanded the officer-of-the-day, at once. Instinctively he felt it must be he.

"Dean, sir," was the answer. "They say he got whiskey, somehow, and after a good start on that he made a break for the outside—and got that, too."

"Was everything—quiet—round by the colonel's?" inquired Captain Prince, one thought following another in quick succession, and he looked searchingly into Corcoran's face, showing red in the gleam from the sergeant's lantern.

"Quiet? Yes, sir, perfectly quiet." Too damned quiet, he would have added, as his thoughts reverted to Number Six and his stupor. How he wished the captain would quit questioning, but Prince was abnormally inquisitive when it was neither his guard, nor, as Corcoran would have it, his business. Still holding the relief in ranks, the officer queried.

"Which way did he go and who were after him? Why didn't they call the guard?" he demanded, stern and suspicious now, for Corcoran's Irish eye was shifting and his manner evasive.

"Number Eight can tell, sir. I don't know."

Prince turned to his lieutenant.

"Speak up, Eight," said Trott. "When was it—first?"

"Near an hour ago, sir. Soon after eleven, the pill — the attendant said," and Eight had no scruples. Eight was eager to tell and clear himself.

"Why didn't you give the alarm?"

"'Cause I didn't know nothin' about it, sir, till they came and told me later. He didn't get away over my beat."

"Who first told you? How did you get to know it?" asked Prince.

"The 'tendant, sir, came blowing back 'bout half past eleven, and said a man with the horrors had skipped, an' he thought he was drowned."

"Then he went out the front way—and out to the sea?"

"He *started* that way, sir, but—" and Number Eight stopped, with a gulp.

"How do you mean started that way?" said Trott.

"'Twas the south window by his bed, sir, he went through. Then he must ha' took 'long back of the north line, sir. He didn't cross *me!*"

"You mean that he went up back of your post toward Number Seven, is that it?" demanded Trott.

Another gulp was the inarticulate answer. Public shifting of blame to a comrade's shoulders, even when that other is no friend, wins no man honors in the rank and file, but Trott was not to be denied. Again he demanded:

"It was through Number Seven he got away, was it? How's that, Dawson?"

And then came sudden distraction; the sharp challenge of the sentry in front of the guard house; the instant answer in a well-known voice:

"Commahnding officer and adjutant!"

Then the sentry's response: "Copple the Ga-a-ahd, commending officer and adjutant!"

Whereat a snicker shook the rear rank. Regulations imposed upon Number One the duty of repeating, *verbatim*, the response to his challenge, leaving to the corporal of the relief the task of further investigation. The sentry couldn't say "commahnding" without precipitating a chuckle and being charged with daring to mimic the post commander. He couldn't come out flat voweled, without possible suspicion of correcting his superior's English. He compromised with a comical swallow of the syllable at issue, and a ludicrous result that was balm to the soul of the officer-of-the-day. Trott bit his lips to check the grin, nodded assent to the inquiry in Corcoran's eyes, and the little Celt sprang forward to receive the distinguished and most unusual visitor.

"Advance junior with the countersign," and Fethers stepped briskly to the lowering bayonet and murmured "San Mateo," whereat Corcoran's voice was again uplifted in the official, "Advance, commending officer and adjutant." But no one snickered now. Crab had come in no "commending" mood.

"What's this I hear, Mr. Officer-of-the-day?" he began, in quick, querelous tone. "A hospital prisoner—a—a most abandoned character, allowed to escape through your guard?"

"I'm just investigating, sir," began Trott, when again the sentry's challenge broke on the night, and

at the outer edge of the circle of light from the sergeant's lantern, three dim forms could just be seen, the one in the middle seemingly supported by the others, and the answer was:

"Friends with a sick man."

"Copple of the Guard, friends with a sick man," yowled Number One, his huge voice drowning the odd, high-pitched, complaining tone in which Crabtree was again addressing the luckless subaltern, to the end that Trott was enabled—even compelled—to say, "I beg pardon, sir; I did not quite understand."

"What I ahsked, sir," began Crabtree, when Corcoran, after a moment's counsel with himself and a whispered hint from the sergeant, called confidently:

"Advance wan and be recognized," which hapless venture gave Crab another grievance:

"Tut, tut, tut," he began. "St—st—stop that instantly. Surely, Mr. Trott, your guard should know better than to advahnce anybody in presence of the commahnding officer without his permission."

"Halt those men, corporal," gruffly interjected Trott. "Stay where you are!"

But one of them was sore spent, and Crabtree was quick to see it.

"Uh, er—bring that man here," he said. "Lend a hand there, two of you!" he quickly added, turning to the relief. "What's that you have on your arm there, sir," and whatever it was the man addressed wriggled it off and ran to the aid of his fellows. Be-

tween them they lugged the sick man to the light, and Crab took one quick look into the dulled and lifeless eyes, the half-sodden, livid face. "Why, this man's taken morphine," he cried. "Here, run him round, lively. Lay hold, two more of you. Keep him on his feet; keep him going! Thump him; *hammer* him if need be! Run for the hospital sergeant, you! What's he doing with belts on?—A sentry?—Number Six? An opium fiend on the colonel's post? Why, really, Mr. Trott, your guard has been mismanaged in the most extraordinary manner! What? *Brewster?* Then where'd he—how'd he—get it?"

Who could answer? There was dead silence a moment, broken only by the moan of the poisoned man, the pleadings and exortation of his comrades as they dragged and shoved him about in the starlight. Fethers had stooped and possessed himself of the flimsy white scarf that had dropped from Steinmann's arm, and as he curiously fumbled at its folds, in manlike ignorance of either make or material, something fell to the ground, which Prince saw, then stooped and picked up a little note in sealed envelope, bearing only the superscription "Lieutenant Walker," which, after one quick glance, he thrust within the breast of his khaki blouse. Then Crabtree turned and saw.

"What have you there?" demanded he of the post adjutant.

"A shawl or scarf—or something," said Fethers, vaguely.

Captain Crabtree bent and felt it with discriminating fingers; took it in both hands; opened it to the light and stared. "Why, this is jusi—almost priceless. How on earth came this—here?" he cried. Already Prince was edging away and busying himself with anything else.

"Steinmann, sir," began the sergeant, slowly.

"Come here, Steinmann," demanded Crabtree, impatiently. "How came you by this?"

"Picked it up, sir, just at the edge of the grove, just back of Lieutenant Walker's."

Prince set his jaws together with a savage, yet unspoken, curse and purposely dove into the guard house. Fethers turned sharply away. The sergeant and his few men stood stiffly at attention, facing the senior officer, who had slowly dropped his hands and was staring almost stupidly into the young soldier's stolid face.

"Just back of Lieutenant *Walker's?*" The words came slowly from the commander's lips, and as slowly a light seemed dawning on his sluggish brain. A moment of intense silence followed, then he whirled on Number Seven, no longer sullen and truculent, but nervous and in dread of unknown wrath to come. Even the dullest of the guard could see there was something sorely amiss.

"Private Dawson," demanded Crabtree, "was there a woman with that prisoner when he escaped across your post?"

"They never crossed my post, sir. I'd a stopped them if they had, sir. They went on up behind and in through the trees."

"Then there was a woman?"

"There was two, sir."

CHAPTER XIII.

"WALKER," shouted Captain Prince, stalking into the open hallway of that worthy's quarters the following morning, "how soon will you be out?"

There were sounds of sluicing and splashing from an inner room, whence presently a towzled, red-faced head and a section of bathrobe appeared at a doorway farther back, then came the inelegant query, "What d'y want?"

"I want a word with you, young man," said Prince, rather gravely, "and there are reasons why I would like it before going to breakfast, so get a move —and some clothes—on you."

The head disappeared and the questions came from farther within.

"Where do you breakfast?"

Prince strolled back to the veranda without reply. There were qualities or characteristics about Lieutenant Walker that gave him occasional annoyance and that fairly exasperated Captain Crabtree, who on more than one occasion had been heard to say he wished that Walker were in *his* company where he could teach him better manners, for manners Walker certainly lacked.

Nor was this all. Even mannerless men were taught, as the result of a year or so of military service, something of deference and respect to seniors in age and station, but Walker apparently had less of these than any subaltern Prince had ever met. Just what were his antecedents nobody really knew and Walker never told. He was credited in the army register to a state of the middle west, and to some five months' service in the ranks with one of its regiments in '98. He had later joined for a short time one of the regiments of national volunteers, with the commission of second lieutenant, but resigned soon after reaching Manila. When the regular army was increased, and a number of subalterns came up from the ranks, and from the volunteers, generally with a record behind them for efficient and valuable service, this unknown, unheralded Walker was gazetted a first lieutenant in the Forty-Second, no one of its field or company officers having met him before, no one of their number being able to account for him. He was rather a good-looking chap, with wavy chestnut hair and curly moustache. He had abundance of clothes and, at first, plenty of money, which he squandered lavishly. He was of no earthly account as a company officer and seemed to have no desire to learn. Books he had none. Certain drills and duties he attended because he had to. Social functions, to which he was invited with his new-made brother officers, he could hardly have enjoyed, for social

graces he had none, and it speedily developed that he was only at home among the billiard and pool rooms of the eastern city, in whose suburbs the regiment was organized and gradually licked into shape. The theatre, especially vaudeville shows, he rejoiced in. He was an expert at base ball and knew the batting and fielding average of every prominent player in the National or American Leagues. He had a slap dash, off hand way about him, and a certain jovial generosity that much impressed many of his juniors. But with it all there was ever present something of the impudent, devil-may-care, you-are-no-better-than-I-am manner so noticeable in the street-bred, slum-haunting youth of our cities and that is not lacking even in "young America" of our foremost schools and colleges. Taught no lesson of deference or courtesy at home; turned loose among a lot of other young cubs before fairly over their callow, uncouth boyhood; scorning all civilities as fit only for girls—all show of respect to rank, age or station as confession of inferiority, the average lad of our municipalities is as lacking in good manners as the foreign-bred article may be in morals. As raw material he can challenge comparison, but polish he utterly lacks.

Backed by some home influence that the Department could not ignore, Walker had sprouted in the regular service, and under the new dispensation there he at least found one field of distinction. He had a certain native wit and shrewdness, a command of

the latest and most descriptive slang and, above all, a degree of skill with bat, cue and racket that, coupled with intuitive knowledge of almost every outdoor game except golf and polo, served to make him immensely popular among the enlisted men and not a little useful at regimental headquarters. The colonel believed in athletics, and the regiment had its base ball, basket ball and football teams that, coached by Walker, who played second base as though born to the diamond, won many a famous match during their stay in the States, and gave the Forty-Second a brilliant entree to the Philippines—the game between the regimental nine and the "All Manila" played on the Bagumbayan field in presence of most of the great garrison, resulting in a victory for the regiment to the tune of five to three. The new major general commanding wasn't half as much talked about the rest of that week as Mr. "Hasty" Walker, of the Forty-Second. Men who even slightly knew him in his brief days in the volunteers hastened to claim acquaintance, and men who never had known him at all sought him out and gave him gorgeous welcome. On all hands the Forty-Second was congratulated on having such a team and coach, and its ten days' stay in camp on the sea front of the Paseo de Santa Lucia was the center of athletic events of the year, early as it was and just on the tail of the typhoon season. Then they were ordered off up country to strengthen the stations in Ilocos Sur

and Norte. The team was scattered, as were the companies, and Walker had speedily to seek his military level, and as the story opens was just about finding it.

"Walker has been utterly spoiled," said Crabtree. "Now he should be made to understand there's something to soldiering besides sport." "Walker needs a firm hand and a captain," said Prince, one of whose subs was detached in the States and the other at the station. "Walker needs coaching more than he gave," said Captain Cagger, who backed him heavily until they got down to garrison duty. "Walker should be serving as subaltern instead of commanding a company," said everybody, but, just as luck would have it, Walker's own captain, who had been precisely of everybody else's opinion, and who had complained incessantly of Walker's cheek and independence, found means to get a detail in Manila, and so, without any training whatsoever as subaltern, the least deserving officer of their number found himself in command of his company. Crabtree had written twice to the colonel, begging that Walker be transferred to a company with a head to it, and that a soldier be sent to the rescue of Company "L," which was going thither (as Crab was sometimes betrayed into saying it) "hands down." But the colonel was counting each day on the coming of his star, and he left that problem to his successor, and Walker unmolested.

Nor was this all. Blake's regimental quartermaster had taken two months' leave for the benefit of his health and gone to Japan, Fethers doing double duty in his absence. Craven, acting post commissary and exchange officer, had been summoned to Manila as witness before that same court, some two weeks before Blake, and Crabtree, being very short of experienced subalterns, when called upon to furnish a substitute, was at a loss whom to name for that post in Craven's protracted absence. Originally it was supposed that that would hardly exceed ten days. Crabtree was surprised when Walker announced his willingness to try it awhile, and almost ashamed of himself when he sent in his name to the office. Blake, who had known Walker but a short time, and liked him but little, hardly fancied the choice, but feared to do injustice, shrank from hurting Crabtree or Walker or both, and, so, saying to himself, "it's only for a few days anyhow," told Fethers to issue the order, whereupon Craven turned over his funds to Walker and went. It often had happened in the old frontier days that a lieutenant found himself post adjutant, post quartermaster and commissary, signal officer and company commander, but it was a rare thing in the Islands to see the commissary, company commander and exchange officer all in one. It did not please anybody at Boutelle—unless it was Walker.

Nor was it among the officers only that Walker's lack of manner had made him foes. The ladies of the

station were little inclined to like him. Possibly that was the reason pretty Mrs. Shane declared it time to take him in hand and try to smooth away his many asperities. Anything Mrs. Shane decided upon Mr. Shane seconded. A more dutiful officer and subordinate husband had rarely been known in the army. He didn't in the least approve of Walker as a soldier and he didn't like him as a man. Walker's associates in the States, and his actions in San Sulpicio, rumors of which were rife in the garrison, had done much to prejudice the educated, conscientious man against the "hoodlum." More than any two officers, even Trott and Hikeman, had Walker been going to town, sometimes overstaying his leave, sometimes using up pony after pony in the effort to save his distance on return. Before they had been at Boutelle a fortnight this intimacy with young Dean was again in full swing, and elders were much surprised thereat, for the civilian seemed so much the worthier man. Before they had been at Boutelle a month the chumship suddenly ended in what was said to be a row, and nobody at Boutelle was surprised at all. The seniors who had met Harry Dean were prompt to say he could not long stomach such clay as Walker. It was rumored that six days after the rupture Walker had gone to town in hopes of patching up a truce, and that Dean had damned him out of the office. The schoolmaster heard it in part and told it in profusion. But all witnesses and participants

save Walker himself were buried now, and so far as was known at Boutelle he could tell his own story without fear of contradiction.

There was one man who had a theory, however, and that was Captain Prince. He had striven to induce Ray to tell him the cause of the violent quarrel he had so fortunately heard and so promptly interrupted, but Ray was dumb. He wouldn't ask Walker, for he felt sure that Walker would lie. The mere fact that Ray refused to speak of it, however, confirmed Prince in the belief that a woman's name was involved. Then came the incident of the finding of that dainty scarf; then his capture of that sealed and superscribed letter, and Prince believed he had a clue of more importance than the case of Amos Dean, of whom not a trace had been found since the moment of his disappearance in the grove at the back of Number Eight, and to the north of the colonel's.

It was to test his theory that, early on the morning following these discoveries, Captain Prince, without a word to Ray or to anybody, marched into Walker's quarters and demanded speech with him, and Walker, scenting mischief, and conscious that he had been overheard in the use of threatening and abusive language to an officer who was held in much esteem, sought to stand off his unwelcome visitor as long as possible in order to frame his plan of action. What the devil did Prince mean by butting in where it was none of his business?

But if he thought to weary his would-be investigator, Walker was in error. Prince, too, had much to think of and was making further discoveries. Pacing the length of the veranda, which ran the entire front and south side of Walker's half set, he was taking note of something that never before had caught his eye, that little worn path leading diagonally from opposite the rear of Walker's to the almost invisible gateway in the colonel's wall. Something prompted him to go down the steps to examine the foot prints in the sand soil; to go further out, and further, until he came upon the traces of army-shod feet—fresh foot prints, six of them—all heading northward across the open space toward the grove that covered the northwest corner of the Boutelle preserves. The footprints of the relief were, of course, Corcoran's party after they had left the bewildered Brewster and his caretakers at the mess. Then over there was where Steinman picked up the shawl, and over there he followed. Yes, there was the print of Steinman's right foot as he swerved out of ranks and swooped to pick up his prize. There were other footprints that had come through the grove apparently to the southward edge and then scattered. There were those of a man, visible only in places, for the ground was firmer. There were the traces of bare feet with spreading toes, several of these both of men and women, presumably, and that grove had been a popular rendezvous doubtless for the domestics of the

neighboring quarters. But there was one rootprint that, quicker than the others, had caught his eye—the prints of slender, delicate, American-made shoes, with high pointed heels—the prints of a dainty little pair such as only our makers build and only our girls can wear, and when he saw it Prince's honest heart went down with a thud. There were others, just like them, leading away to the colonel's gate. There were others, just like them, coming away from the colonel's gate and toward Walker's bungalow. It was useless to try to obliterate. They had come and gone as many as half a dozen times, so the old trailer in him said, within the last forty-eight hours. And then, in the soft, moist sand close to Walker's back steps, his searching eyes found more of them and more. There were little, semi-circular imprints on the steps themselves, with tiny dots along the periphery that could have been made by nothing but tiny pointed heels, and Prince's service brogans came down forcefully, stern foremost, on each of a discernable quartette of these betraying traces and crushed and ground them out of sight.

"What you doing, Princey? Practising that new 'bout face? Damned if I can do it!" came the suspiciously cordial hail from the front, and, glancing quickly thither, Prince beheld Mr. Walker attired in khaki and girt with saber belt in readiness for morning drill. Absorbed in his search the captain had forgotten this possibility. "Thought you wanted to

see me and I had hot coffee for you, but you slid for home, I s'pose. Have some now?"

"Thanks, no," said the captain, coldly. Here was the only lieutenant in all the Forty-Second that dare drop the "captain" in addressing him; that, worse still, should dare such familiarity as "Princey." His soul had been smouldering within him, now it blazed with sudden wrath. Between a splenetic commanding officer and this impudent, dissolute, disreputable "sub" his temper had been so tried within the past two days that it could brook no more. Shaking his bamboo stick in a nervous hand that longed to shift its clutch to the muscular brown throat before him, Prince strode glowering to the front, his eyes fixed furiously on Walker's already yellowing face.

"You damned young cad!" he cried, his voice hoarse with passion. "If I hadn't found out that you had no *decency* I'd give you the lesson you need for disrespect. It was bad enough when you began it in town." (Whereat a scared look shot into Walker's startled eyes.) "But now, by God, you dare keep it up in this garrison—when she's harbored under the colonel's roof—when she's a friend and associate of the colonel's wife. I've no words to waste. You've got to write your resignation and write at once!"

But the scared look had vanished. A swift, sudden gleam as of wondrous surprise, relief, exultation had followed. The half-hangdog slouch stiffened in-

stantly into a pose of defiance, righteous wrath, a fury of resentment and indignation.

"What the devil you talking about? Get off my porch! Get out of my way or I'll *smash* you, captain or no captain!" And with bulging, threatening fists young Walker bore down on the slight-built, wiry man, ten years his senior in age, thrice ten pounds his inferior in weight. "My God, you and that young squirt over yonder think to bully me, do you? You'll threaten me, will you?" And as Prince could neither back nor dodge, the impact came, the burly young shoulders that had butted their way through many a straining line, without ever a hand or weapon uplifted, sent the lighter antagonist staggering from the low veranda to the sands below, where though he landed feet first and strove vainly to keep his balance, his head struck hard against the sharp corner of a tree box, and he lay stunned and dazed, while the blood spurted instantly from the jagged wound.

Then Walker's wit came back with a rush. He threw off the sabre and sprang for sponge and towels and water. Hilario came running at his call, and Ray, appearing on his side gallery and forbidden by his arrest to leave it, darted round the corner and shouted for Trott, still on duty as officer-of-the-day. But before Trott could reach the scene Prince was again on his feet, refusing Walker's hand or aid, waving him back with one hand, while he strove with

his other, and his handkerchief, to stanch the flow. Trott's face was well nigh as white as the captain's as he reached his side and threw an arm about him. Prince was glaring now at Walker and had begun to speak, but broke off instantly at sight of the officer-of-the-day. All that Trott heard at the time was, "You shall answer for this, you black——" and then the assembly came trilling on the early morning air, showing that drill call must have sounded during the clash of war and words. Walker turned abruptly, picked up his sabre and hastened to join his company, well knowing Crab would be on the lookout for all "lates." Trott led Prince across the road to where Ray stood awaiting them, and between the two they guided him, still quivering with rage and excitement, to the inner room, then sent Hilario for the hospital sergeant.

Only twelve hours earlier Prince was ready to upbraid Lieutenant Ray because that officer refused to give the faintest inkling of the cause of his quarrel with Walker. Now to the eager and excited questionings of both Trott and Ray, the captain made this one reply:

"Don't ask—don't *speak* of it to anybody! It's something I can't tell about."

Then Ray's heart, too, turned heavier. That answer could mean but one thing. Prince, too, had discovered.

CHAPTER XIV.

Events were moving swiftly at Camp Boutelle. Crabtree, up with the dawn, had routed out Trott before reveille and was chasing the clue obtained late at night. Sentry No. 5 of the third relief, posted by Corcoran soon after 11:30, reported that there was some little movement and excitement, with mutterings and running about, and faint, shifting lights among the native huts in the little barrio beyond his post. Then a boat had shoved off into the low, lazy surf, and he heard one voice, at least, of a white man. Crab was for sending a sergeant and party to town, pony back, to see if the fugitives had gone thither, and was brought up standing by the young officer's blunt question. "S'pose he has! What right have we to hold him here?" Then it began to dawn upon Crabtree that Dean was in no sense a prisoner, though he had so described and regarded him. He was merely a civilian patient, who had been taken to hospital for treatment, and then, not liking the treatment, had suddenly quit. That there should have been mysterious circumstances attending his escape, that he should have obtained whiskey and regained his nerve, that he had received a message and pack-

age as late as 11:15 at night, that he should have been sitting up, half dressed at the time, and should have slipped through the open window and met some female or females unknown, but much suspected, up at the grove, that No. 6 had been found in a stupor, presumably drugged, and that Dean's devoted, if misguided daughter, had probably planned the entire affair—all this and more were things that gave him warrant for much uneasiness, but for no arrest. If he could find who "doped" his sentry he might make it unpleasant for her, and impossible to remain longer under the colonel's roof. But so far as law and regulation were concerned the only person to be legally punished, as thus far developed, was poor Brewster, now under guard and only vaguely aware of the nature of his plight. Time and again in the past it had been Mrs. Blake's way to send down to the sentry on No. 6 a comforting cup of coffee. The cavalrymen always claimed that post for their own, and not until they were gone to the field did a man of the Forty-Second enjoy it. Just the same Mrs. Blake often sent coffee to No. 6 of the second relief, and always to No. 6 of the third, at reveille when the colonel had his. Then, since her night vigils on the Deans' account, she had twice had coffee for the attendants at midnight, and No. 6 of the third, on the midnight watch, had duly profited. It was presumed that Brewster had been tendered the comforting cup at the usual time, and in the usual way, at the hands of

one of the native servants—they had at least four—and that, for reasons not yet fully established, some one had found means to drug it. Crab had his theory that it was Gertrude's doing, to prevent his sentry's seeing or hearing her father's escape along the shore to the barrio to the south and that she had a boat there to meet him and bear him away. Why, he could not yet conjecture unless it were that they suspected the Manila authorities had proofs of Dean's peculations and had ordered his arrest. If Crab had known at this moment of the nature of Hilario's mission to San Sulpicio he would have been sure of it. Then his course would have been clear.

As matters stood, he reluctantly dismissed the officer-of-the-day toward six o'clock, that they might have bath and breakfast before resuming the investigation. What worried him most was how to deal with Gertrude Dean, the guest and girlish friend of the wife of the real commanding officer.

And so Trott got back in time for the fray at Walker's, and then for an early sedition at the mess. When Walker and the others came in from drill they found Trott just finishing, and Belden it was who spoke. "Well, it's settled! Mrs. Cooney says she'll be ready to feed us from to-night on, so my resignation goes in, too."

"You!" said Trott, in amaze. "I thought you were to stick by Crab to the end."

"And sit here all alone with him at dinner and

hear his tenth-time-told whoppers! I'm damned if I can!"

"What do you bet he doesn't come after us to Mrs. Cooney's?" demanded Walker, as he dropped into a seat.

"If he comes we've got to welcome him, that's all there is to it, only he'll have to be told this is simply a boarding house, not a mess. No rules 'go' except Mrs. Cooney's."

"Then why wait till luncheon?" demanded Trott, who was nearly due at guard mounting. "Let's settle with Belden here and now, and have our resignation in form of a Round Robin when he comes dawdling in for breakfast, just to keep the old officer-of-the-day kicking his heels about the office half an hour longer. You've got the accounts ready, haven't you, Belden? What's mine?"

"Forty-eight forty, Mex," said Belden, consulting his mess book, "and I want no checks. Crab won't have 'em."

"There goes first call," answered Trott. "I'll send mine over by Hilario. Let's get the Round Robin fixed up. Here, Hikey, you write it and let me sign before I have to skip. Here's paper and everything." But Hikeman was young as a soldier—and afeard. Walker would not look up from his plate. Belden was busy with his book. "Damn!" said Trott. "Here, I'll start it!"

"Camp Boutelle, Nov. —d, 1903.

"Sir:—

"The undersigned hereby respectfully——"

"What?'" he queried, bobbing up his head at some unexpected interruption.

"You can't say *under*signed 'fit's to be a Round Robin," suggested Belden.

"Gosh! That's so! What in blazes do you say?" And the seditious document went to fragments. "Here, I have it!" and again the pen flew over the paper. "The circumsigned hereby respectfully tender their resignations as members of the officers' mess and give notice of their withdrawal from this date. All dues paid as per report of the Treasurer." Then in bold hand the signature was dashed diagonally across the lower left hand corner. "You take lower right, Belden," said Trott. "Your writing and mine are utterly unlike. Let Hikeman and—and Mr. Walker sign up there, somewhere, or 'round it, somehow. There's the band; I must be off!"

"*Mr.* Walker!" Then there had been some other breach in which their late champion was involved. The quarrel with Ray was already public property. Rumor of the morning's affray was even now bruited among the married quarters, for servants had seen, but as yet the mess had not heard. Belden and Hikeman signed as requested and pushed the paper silently to Walker, who sat in gloomy thought. "I'll see that Blunt's interest is looked after—and

Prince's," said Belden. "It's only temporary, anyhow." He was counting the gold and silver set before him by Hikeman. He added to it his own share, mainly in notes, and before Walker rose to leave, after silently scrawling his name, Hilario came shuffling in with a sealed and bulging envelope to settle the score of Lieutenant Trott, but Walker made no sign.

"Shall Hilario go with you and bring yours over, Walker?" asked Belden, bluntly. "We can't leave anything unsettled, you know."

"Oh—I suppose so, if you're in a hurry," said Walker, and went lunging out into the breeze and sunshine, toothpick at full play. Hilario, brown-faced, brown-footed, white-robed, followed meekly. Hikeman looked nervously out. "If there's nothing more, Belden, I think I'll skip," said he, and vanished, leaving the treasurer at his accounts.

Walker crossed the roadway, stopped, reflected a moment, and then bade Hilario return. "*Para comer—almuerzo,*" he explained, whereupon the Tagalog valet, ever ready for a chat with the messmen and a better breakfast than his dusky helpmate could give him, came grinning back to the rear entrance and doffing his broad-brimmed straw to Lieutenant Hikeman, who hung back at the steps to let Walker get a good start. It was a way with Walker when he had differed with any one of his comrades to pester most of the others with his side of the story,

and if Ray had had a difference with Walker Mr. Hikeman had no desire to appear as a Walker sympathizer. He tilted his sun helmet in response to the valet's salute, then scuttled down the steps and, turning sharp to his right, took the roundabout route to his quarters. He did not wish to meet Crabtree, and it was Crabtree's time for breakfast.

There were still two covers on the table untouched, those of the commanding officer and a junior lieutenant who has had the good fortune to escape other mention in this tale, and who could have escaped entirely but for events that followed. He came at Belden's summons, a few minutes later; nervously affixed his signature; paid his score, as prearranged, and strove to compose himself to eat. Then in came Walker once again and laid a fifty dollar "greenback" upon the treasurer's desk.

"Sorry, old chap, to keep you waiting," said he. "I find I've only a little left in Mex, and had to rake out this." Belden figured silently a moment and began parceling out the change.

"You know you ordered quite a lot of wine, Walker. It makes your bill bigger."

"Oh, that's all right. Never mind any receipt. I don't keep 'em 'mong friends."

"Here comes the—the C. O.!" exclaimed the youngster at the table. "I—I believe I don't care for——" and further words were needless. Seizing his cap he fled through the rear door out into the com-

pound. Even Belden felt a sinking spell. "I'm blessed if I want to see his face when he reads that!" said he, hastily arranging his books, papers and cash upon the table, Round Robin uppermost. "I'll let him send for me." And he, too, vanished by way of the anteroom and the next veranda. Walker sprang to the window and took one quick glance. The slim, soldierly form in khaki was still two hundred yards away, sauntering, as was the captain's custom when on the way to mess. *"Agua fria,"* said Walker to the servant, picking up a glass. The boy darted back to the cool, shaded nook on the rear porch and reappeared presently with a brimming goblet. Walker gulped, turned and, following Belden's footsteps, shot through the anteroom and down the southward steps of the veranda toward the sea.

And when Crabtree entered, perhaps a minute later, only the Filipino steward, his back at the pantry door, stood smiling and salaaming to greet him.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs. Blake had two patients on her hands this morning. The elder invalid, Mrs. Dean, was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion when her hostess tiptoed in at six o'clock to see her, but Gertrude was kneeling by the foot of the bed, her head buried in hands that were cold and tremulous, despite the contact of a face that glowed like fire.

Wearied after two long days of care and anxiety, Mrs. Blake had gone early to bed the previous night, awaking soon after twelve to inquire the cause of the subdued excitement below stairs. Gertrude was the first to reach and reassure her. "They have come to tell us what—I should have told you first thing in the morning, dear Mrs. Blake. It is nothing but that father has—has left the hospital. He *couldn't* stay there! He had business he *must* see to—over in town—and he was going crazy with nervousness here. He thought—they were trying to make a prisoner of him, and—so did I. Oh, forgive me, if I have done wrong, but—I helped him."

The messenger of the commanding officer was gone before Mrs. Blake was fairly wide awake. He had brought the tidings because, as Captain Crabtree

bade him explain, "it was thought that the family ought to know." Nothing was said about No. 6. The messenger had told Miss Gertrude, who had appeared, night lamp in hand, on the stone stairway, even before he could make the Filipino house servant understand—that Captain Crabtree and the hospital sergeant thought Mr. Dean had come here, perhaps. He did not tell her they thought he might have made way with himself by a plunge into the breakers. He returned to the commanding officer to say that Dean was not there. They did not know where he was—were, of course, very anxious about him and very grateful to Captain Crabtree, but still believed that no harm would befall the father. Mr. Dean had many friends among the fishermen and natives all along the bay shore—which was strictly true, as the customs officials at Manila had reason to know. Miss Dean, said the messenger, would write to Captain Crabtree and explain more fully in the morning, and so silence once more settled about the colonel's quarters, though peace of mind was denied the post commander. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, he believed, before his eyelids closed, that Gertrude Dean had connived at if not compassed the "doping" of his sentry, and though he held as sacred everything sheltered beneath the roof of the colonel commanding when the colonel was present, he knew no higher duty in the absence of that colonel, and his own elevation to the command, than that of seeing that even the

colonel's household contained no questionable member. He had the evidence of a sentry—No. 7—that two women had aided his "prisoner patient" to escape. He had no doubt whatever that Gertrude Dean was one of them—*the* one in fact, and though he knew he had no legal right to hold or hamper Amos Dean, he raged in his soul at the thought that any one within his lines should dare oppose the act or will of him, the commanding officer. He had been bred to the creed from boyhood, and even long years of service under that more limited monarch—a post commander of Uncle Sam—had not served to banish it. He would await the coming of Miss Dean's promised letter in the morning before acting on his information and proceeding against this brazen young person who scoffed at his orders and seduced his guard. It might even serve, too, as a lesson to Mrs. Shane.

But that promised letter was not on his desk when, nearly thirty minutes after guard mounting, he hastened in with a bulky envelope, followed by a flustered looking orderly burdened with books, papers and a heavy little canvas sack. He barely noticed Lieutenant Trott, old officer-of-the-day, waiting, with the guard report book, to be variously berated before being relieved. He saw a note addressed in the well-known hand of Mrs. Blake, and under ordinary circumstances would have opened it at once. He was very pale, yet beads of perspiration were starting

from his brow and trickling down his nose and cheeks. The new orderly stood and tapped at the door, awaiting the summons to enter and report, but Crabtree neither saw nor heard. "My compliments to the adjutant," he briefly said, as his follower carefully placed before him the miscellaneous assortment with which he was ladened. The sack gave a metallic clink as it was dropped beside the blotting pad, and the bearer vanished in search of the needed officer. Presently he returned. "The adjutant's out, sir," said he, standing at salute just within the door.

"Out—out where, pray? The adjutant of all men should not be out at this time!" cried Crabtree, pettishly, testily.

"Beg pardon, captain," said Trott, stepping forward, with very perfunctory touch of the hat brim. "Mrs. Blake's *mozo* came running over a few moments ago with a note to Fethers—there's one for you, sir, too—and Fethers said he'd be over and back in ten minutes—I thought you might have met him."

"Most extraordinary proceeding, this summoning the commanding officer's staff to attend the behests of—of persons not in the military service—at an orderly hour, too! Of what can Captain Fethers be thinking?" And here Crabtree whirled in his chair and glared at Trott. "Is it a way in the cavalry?" he demanded.

"Shouldn't wonder, sir!" answered Trott, with aggravating repose of manner, unusual to him.

"Perhaps Mrs. Blake's letter will explain," he finished at a venture. If we were in Fethers's place and question arose as between Captain Crabtree and his colonel's wife, he knew well which side he would pick to win, but Crabtree had begun to read and was already starting from his chair.

"Dear Captain Crabtree," it began. "Miss Dean is too ill and exhausted to write, and I have promised to take the duty for her, but first, seeing you going to mess, I have ventured to ask Captain Fethers to come to me a moment. The smoke of a steamer, southbound, can just be made out, and I wish his aid in some papers that should be sent at once to Colonel Blake. Praying your pardon, I remain, very sincerely yours, A. B. Blake."

A steamer's smoke in the offing? That was indeed a matter of immediate consequence! "Go for the signal sergeant," he called to the doorway, and one of the two orderlies shot out of sight. "Er—uh—go for my glahses," he ordered the other. "You'll—uh—have to wait—uh, Mr. Trott. I'll see you presently," he concluded, picking up his sun helmet and starting for the door. Then, suddenly, recollecting, stopped, glanced back at the littered table and then nervously, angrily about the room. "Is there no safe in the commahnding officer's office?" he demanded. "Most extraordinary thing! Where can he keep valuable papers—confidential matters——" he broke off suddenly. The sergeant of the guard

had sprung into the hallway and stood, flushed and eager, at the door.

"Well, what is it, sergeant?" inquired Crabtree.

"No. 6, sir, reports steamer coming in!"

"And did he suppose the commahnding officer didn't know it?" inquired Crabtree, in his most languid manner, as who should say, "Can anything occur within sight or hearing that this Omniscience need be told of?"

"No, sir, but them's the standing orders," explained the sergeant, reddening. Crab had developed the faculty of antagonizing everybody, high or low.

"Very well, sergeant; that will do. Mr. Trott, I leave you in charge of the office during my temporary absence. You will see to it, sir, that nothing on that table is disturbed." And with that he was gone.

At the south end of the hospital, tallest building of Camp Boutelle, a wooden tower had been built, and a lookout was for quite a time stationed at the top. The practice had fallen into disuse, but the platform and rail were still there, and thither Crabtree hastened and was soon peering, unimpeded, out to sea, the signal sergeant and orderly in attendance. The coming craft was still too far out to betray her class or character, a dull speck, trailing a long, far-spreading cloud of smoke was all even the big binocular could discover. Cruiser or gunboat she might be. Coastwise steamer, returning from a trip with sup-

plies to Aparri and Vigan she might be, but hardly despatch boat—that should come from the south. Whether she brought news or not, he had news to send, and it should go forthwith, to be wired from Dagupan or steamed straight into Manila, as her skipper deemed wisest. Far to the north the low line of Point Candon streaked the dim horizon, and a vague film as of brush fire smoke hung lifeless over the southward bay, but nowhere else within human vision was there speck of sail, smoke or steam to dot the lonely desert of the China Sea. Never before had Crabtree so felt the force of their isolation. How fared it to-day with the cavalry command, he wondered, as he turned the glasses on the deep-hued, forest-crowned barrier that billowed between him and the northeast. What on earth could Blunt be doing? And with the thought the glasses swept the sandy shore, with its flashing white line of surf, curving gently away southwestward, with the brown thatched native huts nestling amid the foliage, the shallow wastes of the lagoon, the hard baked ridges of the rice fields, the distant walls and towers of the old church and convent at San Sulpicio. Why should his sub-commanders be silent? Why had he, Crabtree commanding, no stirring tidings of soldier success to despatch officially for the information of the major general commanding the division of the Philippines?

Instead of anything like that, what tale of unsol-

dierly doing might not somebody be sending by this very steamer, for how was he to prevent its going if some one chose to tell? Not a word received from Blunt, who might be massacred for all he knew. Not a good word from Forrest, who as yet had naught but disaster to report. Not a word from Cagger and the post surgeon, speeding to Forrest's aid. Nothing to tell, if he had to tell it—just to temper the worse tales others would be sure to write—but story of a discontented garrison, of a demoralized band and a disbanded mess. Yes, it was high time he got back to earth and wrote his story to some friendly staff officer in Manila "to be used or referred to only in case injurious reports should be in circulation."

But meantime Fethers had returned to the office and gone to the commander's desk. Certain papers were there he needed to use in completing a return, and as he would have sought them, Trott, with gloom and mischief mingling in his face, stretched forth a hand and forbade: .

"Touch not on your peril!" melodramatically exclaimed he. "My orders are peremptory—not a thing to be disturbed."

"Damn it, Trott! I don't want any of *his* things. It's our regimental matters I am digging at now, and I've promised Mrs. Blake to hurry back to her soon as it's done."

"Nobody short of the commahnding officer," began Trott, impressively, when in bolted that eminence

himself and took in the situation at a glance. His quick and apprehensive ear had not failed to catch Trott's palpable mimicry. For a moment he stood and glared at the offender, then with surprising mildness of manner, but with cutting emphasis, addressed him:

"It is to be regretted, Mr. Trott, that you do not seek to improve your manners as you do your English. You are relieved, sir, as old officer-of-the-day, also from the custody of these funds and papers, and you will—er—leave the office."

Trott saluted and stood not on the order of his going. Once outside he gave free rein to his pent-up merriment, but not for long. By dozens the soldiery were streaking across the parade, bound for the west gate and a sight of the coming steamer, still too far distant to be recognized by "land lubber" eyes. It was now nine o'clock, and Fethers longed to break away from the office and return to Mrs. Blake and the welcome and unaccustomed sight in the offing, seeing which Crab saw fit to be more than usually deliberate and impressive.

"It is of the first importance, Captain Fethers, that your best clerks should take my dictation, and that you should be here to—to supervise their work. The first duty of an adjutant is to his commahnding officer, and I need your best support. I have two despatches and two letters to prepare and they must

be—a—strictly confidential. The clerks may come in here—and—a—all doors shall be closed."

"Permit me, then, captain, to send a brief note to Mrs. Blake. She naturally counted on some assistance from the adjutant of her husband's regiment," began the impolitic Fethers, but Crabtree checked him—magnificently.

"Mrs. Blake shall have every assistance she can possibly need by—a—ah—making her wishes known to the commahnding officer," and Fethers incorporated the words in the note which the orderly bore, with giant strides, that he, too, might gaze upon the coming stranger. That he took his time coming back was lost upon the party at the office. Doors were closed full half an hour. Then came a messenger from the signal tower. He was immediately admitted to the presence and reported:

"It's the Formosa, sir, comin' to anchor a mile out in the bay." Crab nodded. He was just in the midst of a second letter. He hoped it might be the Formosa, a trim coaster and not a man-of-war. He knew the Formosa's skipper and could count, he thought, on his promptly pushing on for Manila. He knew it would not be long before her skipper came ashore to exchange greetings and gossip and to taste his good cheer. This time Crab meant it to be particularly good, for he had a favor to ask, but first there was a matter to settle.

"Find Lieutenant Belden," said he, "and say, with

my compliments, that I desire to see him here at once."

It was fully ten minutes before Belden came, flushed and overheated. He had been expecting the summons over an hour. He entered without a word and stood awaiting the pleasure of his commander.

Icily cold was Crabtree's voice as he began:

"You were made custodian of this precious document, Mr. Belden," said he, and he held up the Round Robin, "and you doubtless know its history. At the proper time proper inquiries shall be made. At the moment, however, business is to be settled. According to your figures you should have in hand five hundred and eight dollars and forty cents, Mex, should you not?"

"Those were the figures, sir. I gave them in the memorandum."

"You gave me the figures, all right, but—how about the cash?"

Belden looked up, startled. He had counted on a lashing because of the Round Robin. He had thought of nothing else.

"It was all there, sir, every nickel of it."

"Count it yourself, sir. Possibly you can tell what bills or bank notes are missing."

And Belden counted. To his amaze and distress some two hundred dollars were gone, among them Walker's fifty dollar treasury note.

"I can swear, sir," began Belden, hotly, "and Mr.

Walker was with me, and Mr. Meeker, and *saw* the count."

"Can't help that, Mr. Belden. You took your chances when you left the room and the mess money —unguarded——"

"Couldn't it have been lost—here, Captain Crabtree? I can prove it was all there barely a moment before your entrance."

"The theory is untenable, Mr. Belden. I took the precaution to have Mr. Meeker come in and count it at the mess. The loss is on your shoulders, sir, and before your resignation from the mess can be accepted you must make it good."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the Formosa, as was duly reported, and in less than half an hour her skipper, Cowper, a burly Briton and bold mariner, had come ashore, was received and entertained by and closeted with Captain Crabtree, commanding; was later, at the landing, half timidly accosted by a native girl, at sight of whom a sudden light of recognition shot across his broad and weather-beaten face, and from whose dusky hand he received a letter which he stowed within the breast of his white sackcoat, and then in half an hour from his landing, was on the way back to his ship, Captain Crabtree and orderly with him.

"Just going out to lunch and take a turn about the bay," said Crabtree, most affably, to the eager inquiries of Mrs. Stanhope, Mrs. Fethers and others desirous of sending letters. "We shan't be gone any time at all—back in two or three hours," but despite the airy and affable manner, most people noted an underlay of nervousness, anxiety, worriment, and, noting, spoke of it to one another. The coxswain of the captain's gig already had a packet of letters, at which Crabtree gazed suspiciously and the captain aggressively. It was not good that even such favored

persons as these denizens of an American army post should presume to approach an underling of one of His Brittanic Majesty's merchant marine with letters and tips—and without the knowledge and consent of her commander.

"Fetch those letters to me," he called, as, ponderously, he led the way over the side. Then the Formosa up anchored, and envious watchers along the shore saw her go spinning away toward Sulpicio, where she lay not more than half or three-quarters of an hour, then came steaming back with a brace of black logs towing in her wake, and these proved to be bancas that dropped astern as the Formosa approached her anchorage of the morning. By this time it was mid-afternoon, and to the consternation and sore disappointment of many a spectator, while the bancas came paddling to shore, the steamer swung her head to the sun and went churning sturdily southwestward out to sea. "The thousand and one things Camp Boutelle desired of the craft and captain could not be attended to this trip," said Crabtree, as spray-dashed and dripping, he was shouldered ashore through the snowy breakers. "Important discoveries at—uh—Sulpicio determined the captain to put at once for Manila, and he's gone. Ah —orderly, my compliments to Captain Fethers, and I desire his presence at my quarters." That was all the satisfaction Camp Boutelle could get.

But the orderly was not so close mouthed. It pres-

ently transpired that the two captains, army and merchant marine, had gone ashore at Sulpicio, and Captain Crabtree inquired everywhere for tidings of the vanished Dean, who had been, so they said in reply, nosing around there as much as two hours, and then on a borrowed pony had taken the southward road as though going after Lieutenant Bluut's column. He had saddle-bags with certain books, papers and extra clothing. He was flighty and wild like, but had been searching and poking about the ruins of his house, and questioning certain prominent native citizens with whom he had been on good terms during the prosperous days of the agency. He had found some papers he needed, and certain account books in the safe, also quite a sum in cash. All this the artless native had no scruple in telling, since many saw and everybody knew, just what Dean had done during his brief and hurried visit.

Once assured that Dean was gone for good, since the *ladrones* would probably get him, Captain Crabtree stayed only long enough to inquire for rumors of Blunt, Forrest and Cagger, but got no answer—the only rumors afloat being that all three columns had been destroyed through the prowess and valor of the ever faithful soldiery of the Filipino people. Viva la Republica! Viva Liberdad! Muera los Americanos! He had a word or two with the lieutenant commanding the little guard whose presence was all that insured his safety at such a distance from

his post, then back he went to his boat and the Formosa, in whose cabin he wrote two more missives to Manila, then had a few emphatic verbal exchanges in guarded tone with the Formosa's skipper, after which, as her engineer slowed down, he slipped over the side to the crazy native canoe, sending the orderly ahead of him, and, when off the seaward gate of Camp Boutelle, was cast loose and paddled ashore. That was all the orderly knew of the trip.

But Boutelle was in a fury over having been given the slip by the one craft likely to appear for another week. Everybody had letters to send, and nobody dreamed of other and better boats coming. Fethers, venturing to refer to this state of wrath, was met with prompt and cutting response.

"It was by order of your commahnding officer," said Crabtree, with much dignity. "No one of you knows the nature of my instructions—or discoveries. It must be sufficient to you that, in order to further ensure the safety of the garrison, it was necessary to send appeal to Manila for troops to replace those sent to the field, and they cannot come too quick."

Nor, apparently, could the Formosa go too quickly. She was hull down to the southwest long before the sun, and even her smoke trail had dimmed to a low-hanging cloud along the horizon before being swept away by the wing of night. Fethers, going over to see Mrs. Blake in course of the late afternoon, found her serene and undisturbed. Now that Dean had

been heard from, safe and doing much better than could have been expected, both his wife and daughter seemed vastly relieved in mind and began to mend in body. "And my letters," said Mrs. Blake, "are safe aboard the Formosa and should be in the colonel's hands to-morrow night. Now let us go and see Sandy Ray."

They found him fretful and nervous, almost beyond control. No tidings having come from Cagger or Forrest, he was possessed with the idea that there had been more fighting; that the *ladrones* were between the columns and the post, cutting off all communication; that Blunt had fallen among thieves and was fighting for life in the dense jungles that lay to right and left of the Dagupan road. All this occurring and he, the latest comer to the command, cooped up here in shameful apathy and arrest, so it would surely be said. Sandy could hardly think or speak of or listen to anything except his distressing plight. He seemed little interested in hearing the details of Dean's double escape; little impressed by the story of secret rejoicings at San Sulpicio, less concerned about the condition of Mrs. and Miss Dean, and absolutely indifferent to Mrs. Blake's eloquence and enthusiastic praise of Gertrude's unselfish devotion and general loveliness of mind and matter. "Aunt Nan" was actually piqued at his unresponsive mood, and believing it due to his general depression and nothing else, began afresh to chat about her new-

found friend, in whose present condition she saw so much that took her back to the long years ago when she, too, watched and waited and mourned, when she, too, prayed long and hard and piteously for heaven's help and mercy for a wandering father. It was evident to Fethers and to Ray, both, that the mother heart within her yearned over this undeniably beautiful and really attractive young girl, and still Ray would not take himself out of himself and his selfish cares and say something at least half way appreciative or sympathetic. Fethers wondered at it—wondered how such a clam-like fellow could be the son of genial, laughing, dashing Billy Ray, now colonel of the —th and by far, apparently, both in heart and spirit, the younger man of the two.

They were still seated there, these regimental comrades, Mrs. Blake doing most of the talking, when the orderly of the commanding officer was seen coming along the row and the commanding officer himself, in dazzling white, appeared solemnly pacing his veranda. "It's for me, I suppose," said Fethers, wearily, as they watched the springy step of the trim young soldier. But, instead of turning in, the orderly raised his gloved left hand in salute and bustled on down the line, never stopping until he had crossed the gate road and reached the open doorway of the mess.

"What has been the matter over there?" asked Mrs. Blake. "I have seen more running to and fro, more

excitement, than when you gave a navy dinner. Whom are you, or they, entertaining now?"

"Suspicions chiefly," answered Fethers, with a laugh. "The mess, you know, has dissolved."

"I *didn't* know," said Mrs. Blake. "Who was to tell me? You are the only officer to come near me to-day, and who ever heard of your having anything to tell?"

Fethers bowed his acknowledgment of the implied compliment. "The whole garrison knows it, Mrs. Blake. Most of the officers sent their resignation, in form of a Round Robin, to Captain Crabtree this morning, or, to be accurate, left them at his plate, then skipped. That was the unlucky part of it. The mess money and accounts were placed there at the same time, and in the minute or so they were out of sight before Captain Crabtree came in, some two hundred dollars disappeared."

Mrs. Blake fairly started. "Stolen? Outright, do you think? And do you know what servants were there?" She turned full on Fethers as she asked, her face eager with new-born interest.

"Three or four, it seems," said Fethers, slowly, guardedly. "The steward, two waiters and one or two *mozos* were about the premises, and poor Belden has been investigating for hours. You might as well hunt for truth in—hades. The native lies from the time he can lisp."

"And no one else was about?" asked Mrs. Blake,

glancing along the galleries and into the open hallway as though in dread of eavesdroppers, then, at sight of Hilario, busily dusting sand from Walker's steps across the way, turned reassured to Fethers again.

"Well, I wasn't about for one, and don't know just who were. Did you hear, Ray?" he asked, eager to lug Sandy in for his share of the conversation.

"Haven't heard a thing 'cept what Belden and Meeker told me. Luckily I left the mess when I did or Crab would be adding theft to my other enormities," and Ray looked disgustedly at the distant white figure promenading the shaded veranda.

For a moment there was silence, as the orderly came swiftly back, and then Mr. Belden, fastening his khaki coat at the front, was seen at the mess doorway. Presently he, too, came, somewhat slowly and reluctantly, raised his cap as he passed them by and went on to the captain, and the three sat casting an occasional glance in Crabtree's direction. How could they help it? Then Mrs. Blake spoke. "I'm going to tell *you* two, and mind it goes no further. Somebody has been busy about my quarters. A little sum of "rainy day" money is gone, also some cheap trinkets, yet our native servants came to us with the best of recommendations, all of them, and who from outside would dare slip into the house, when Moon and his wife, both of them Irish, are there to guard us?"

"When did you miss it?" said Sandy, showing at

last some symptom of interest in what was going on about him.

"Only yesterday, though it might have been taken the day before, the money at least. I had no occasion to look at it. It was kept in the desk in my room."

"Gold—or notes?" asked Sandy.

"Both. Something over fifty dollars in our money. Why—have you any suspicion, Sandy?"

Ray reddened. "I was thinking it was lucky Hilario was away all day." His was the only name mentioned.

"Yet your desk, Sandy, and the steps I heard, in there," suggested Mrs. Blake. "Have you missed anything more?"

"I had hardly anything more to miss," said Sandy, reddening still, "anything light, portable or salable, that is."

"You've looked through the desk since I saw you?" persisted Aunt Nannie, and Fethers, noting Ray's growing irritation and uneasiness, turned, too, and studied him closely, curiously. Had not the adjutant, too, been hearing tales of larceny?

"Oh, yes," was the impatient answer. "You know I have had little to do and a lot of time. One has to kill it—somehow."

"Something else *has* been taken away, Sandy—something that puzzles or worries you? Don't hesi-

tate to tell me before Captain Fethers. Your colonel would not."

"Why, it's nothing that can—help any one, that I can see, only it's just—queer. They've stripped some blank cheques from my book."

"Why, Sandy!" cried Mrs. Blake.

"Fact," said Ray, sententiously. "Now, what *mozo* or anything Tagalog would want of blank cheques?"

Fethers gave a long whistle, arose and said, "Let us keep this to ourselves until I see you again. This call's for me, I know. Look at the orderly coming. Crab must have thought we were enjoying ourselves."

And indeed the orderly was coming on the run. Crabtree and Belden both had disappeared. There was sound of suppressed excitement over among the barracks—the "business end" of the post, as Blake declared it. Fethers darted down the steps, and with difficulty restrained his impulse to run in chase of the commanding officer, now, said the orderly, on the way to the office. There was a messenger in from somewhere. Dumbly Ray stood and listened, bound by his arrest to take no step beyond the limits of his quarters. In deep sympathy, mingled with anxiety, his kind friend laid a gentle hand upon his arm. "It will all come right, Sandy," she murmured. "Be patient for mother's sake—but I know how hard it is."

Along the line of officers' quarters other forms be-

gan to appear upon the verandas, especially those few that commanded a view of the distant office across the parade. Every now and then, too, an officer would come forth, take a look, and those not in khaki dove in doors again. Crab allowed no other dress until after parade, and instinctively they felt the summons was coming, and presently it came, loud and clear, the well-known bugle "Officers' Call."

"That tells nothing," called Trott, glancing up at Mrs. Blake and doffing his hat as he hurried by. "He'd summon every officer in garrison if it was only to tell them there had been a scrap in Samar," and Ray stood gazing gloomily after him, and then surveying Walker's bungalow, almost at the moment envying his antagonist who, in spite of the summons, had not yet appeared. Again was it repeated and again, the orderly trumpeter running half way over to the officers' line. Two, three, five minutes passed. Even the chaplain had gone, and little Meeker, all blown and exhausted, had come running in from somewhere out on the beach, and still not a sign of Lieutenant Walker. Yet as the three sat there, Mrs. Blake, Fethers and Ray, barely ten minutes before the call, they had seen him, though none had referred to it, dismount from his sturdy pony, send him to stables in charge of Hilario, opportunely waiting, and enter his domicile. Doors and windows stood wide open, but Walker could not be seen. Again came Crabtree's orderly on the run, panting, too, and

at the front door of the missing officer's quarters he pounded hard and long until Mrs. Blake stepped forward and called him. "Better go in, orderly, Mr. Walker came home but a few moments since."

They heard him rapping and hammering about the house. They waited, wondering, for the orderly to reappear. "I've looked in every room," said he, troubled and perplexed. "And the captain says I'm not to come back till I've found him."

"Have you an idea where he could have gone, Sandy?" asked Mrs. Blake, turning to the youngest officer, standing in silence at her side. He was not reddening now. He was paling. If she had only worded her question in some different way! If she had only asked him if he knew! But the very words compelled him, and he could not dodge them.

"You know we are not friends," he lamely began. "I'm not supposed even to be aware of his existence or notice him in any way." He tried to smile whimsically and carry it off in that way, but his wits were far less keen than hers. She faced him instantly.

"Sandy, you *do* know! He saw me here. He has gone to my house, the back way, too, and to see *her!* He *shall not* worry that child! I'm going now." And go she did, and by the back way, too, only to find the wall gate barred within. Sandy stood at the westward end of the side veranda and watched her. Sandy saw her beat upon it with the little baston of wood, kept there for the purpose, and all in vain.

Moon and his spouse could surely be nowhere within hearing. Moon, doubtless, had hurried over to the quarters to hear the news, and Kathleen, more than likely, had followed suit. Sandy saw Mrs. Blake at last turn impatiently away, saw her walk swiftly southward through the stunted trees, saw her disappear in the direction of the seaward gate, and then, despite eagerness to hear the news from the office, stood at the rear end of the veranda awaiting—she knew not what.

He had not long to wait. Presently, from the heart of the grove to the north of the colonel's compound, hands in his pockets, hat on the back of his head and lips pursed up in attempt at a whistle, sauntering unconcernedly forth, came Lieutenant "Hasty" Walker of the Forty-Second, and Ray's face went crimson with shame, for Walker was looking straight at him, and had caught him spying.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was news from Blunt, at last, that had stirred the garrison, news of consequence indeed. On much bespattered pony a soldier had come lashing in from the San Sulpicio road, bearing a letter which he said had been delivered to the little guard at the ruins by a brace of Macabebe scouts—one of them wounded. Blunt, like Forrest, had been held up in a jungle, had turned savagely on his assailants, and had the wondrous luck to catch a bunch of them and trounce them well, but he himself was shot in the leg, and his boy subaltern was ill of a fever. He was entrenched and could hold out until relieved, but he could not shove ahead southward as was desired. He sent a rude sketch map of the position, which he estimated to be some forty miles west of south from San Sulpicio and a mile back from the beach, and left everything to the discretion of the commanding officer.

Crab was disgusted. What earthly comfort was there in being commanding officer if the command had to be reduced to a company to supply the demands from field columns that could do nothing but get into trouble? It was high time he heard something from Forrest and the relieving force under

Cagger, but he had heard nothing, not even a word as to when to expect the coming of the solemn little escort of the dead and wounded. It was high time to hear that Blunt had broken through and communicated with the scouting parties out from Camp McGrath, near Dagupan, and instead came tidings that Blunt had broken into a gang of insurrectos, number unknown, and was stranded awaiting relief. Men were not needed, nor munitions, only an able-bodied officer. "Who is next for detail, Mr. Adjutant?" he demanded of Fethers, the moment he had read his despatches, and when Fethers said "Mr. Belden, sir," Crab shook his head. "Belden has mess money to make up," said he. "Who is next?"

"Either Captain Prince or Mr. Ray, or I, for that matter, would be glad to go," hazarded Fethers, in disregard of the roster.

"Captain Fethers," said Crab, with asperity, "you know none of these can go! What subaltern, sir?"

And then Fethers had named Mr. Walker, despite his manifold offices, and the bugle had brought to the spot every officer not in close arrest except Mr. Walker himself, who, though having been seen by a dozen people less than thirty minutes before, could be found by none of them now. Even Captain Prince, with a bandaged head at which Crab stared fixedly every little while, was there, silent and undemonstrative, until, in a lull in the low-toned chat, the commanding officer turned suddenly.

"Captain Prince, what do you know of Mr. Walker's whereabouts?" for despite every precaution on part of Prince, Ray and Trott, the story of that human collision on Walker's gallery had somehow, through native channels, possibly, got a start along the line, and Mrs. Shane had found relief from her own anxieties and woe by adding to the perplexities of the post commander. Mrs. Shane, having failed in getting speech with Mr. Walker on her own account, had seen fit to believe that he was somewhere in hiding, awaiting the hostile coming of Captain Prince, and, refusing to tell why she thought so, had mischievously imparted these her views to the wincing Crabtree. Prince's appearance, therefore, with pallid features and a bandaged head, gave confirmation to the story. Prince, even in receiving his injuries, might have put Mr. Walker out of commission for the time being, but Prince's answer was prompt and explicit.

"I know nothing, sir—and I care less."

Now, it had been on the tip of Crab's tongue to declare Walker unworthy the reposing of such a command as that given to Blunt, but the moment it transpired that Walker could not be found, it was characteristic of his strange nature that he became instantly insistent that Walker was the one man available whose local duties should not stand in the way of distinction in the field, and that it was also Walker's right to make the attempt to "fill the bill" with credit

to himself and the regiment. Therefore, Crabtree ordered that Walker be found forthwith, and if not found within ten minutes and the limits of the garrison, to have assembly sounded and every possible shelter in and about Boutelle searched from top to bottom.

Then, while the orderlies were bustling there came sudden silence, as Lieutenant Walker, in excellent flesh and spirits, came strolling in from the direction of the main gate and, without a word, saluted the astonished chief.

"Where on earth have you been all spring and summer?" whispered Trott, as Crabtree, without speaking, busied himself studying the map and affected not to see the late comer. He wished time to think how to deal with him. To the amaze of all present, Walker himself opened the ball.

"Want me, Captain Crabtree?"

"We have been wanting and waiting some time, sir," said Crabtree, severely. "Why did you not obey the call?"

"Didn't hear it, sir."

"And where were you, pray, that you couldn't hear officers' call?"

"Out on the beach, sir. Waves were rolling and children playing. Couldn't hear a thing."

"Then go to your quarters, sir, and make immediate preparations to turn over your funds and be ready for field duty, to relieve Lieutenant Blunt.

You start in two hours. That will do, gentlemen. Uh—ah, Captain Prince, a word with you, sir."

Not until the little gathering had broken up, and most of the party had reached the open air, was it remarked that Walker, obviously startled and half dazed by the sudden announcement, had remained behind. Trott, who would have given a month's mortgaged pay for the chance, and stood enviously by when the detail fell to his fellow subaltern, noted, and could not help noting, that so far from showing eagerness or exultation, Walker had perceptibly started on hearing Crab's abrupt words and as perceptibly had turned a trifle pale. Going straight to Ray's quarters, Trott unbosomed himself of this information on the spot. He had lost what liking he ever had for the man, and even while he envied, had begun to hate him. But Ray, only glancing a moment quickly and curiously in his informant's face, turned away and said nothing. His eyes were seeking the distant gallery at the rear of his colonel's house.

It then lacked but a few minutes of sunset. Prince came presently to join them. "It's the last time I'll be dining with you at Mrs. Blake's expense," said he, grimly, to Ray. "I've joined the Robins, and we peck temporarily at Mrs. Cooney's. I suppose you will continue as usual?"

"Indeed I shan't," said Ray. "Put up my name, too, at Mrs. Cooney's, if there's room. I'll be with

you at breakfast. Of course, I can't be a burden to Mrs. Blake any more than you can. Trott says Crab —detained you," he continued, tentatively.

"He did. He probably meant to ask how my head got battered, then he saw——" and a backward toss of the head toward the opposite quarters told what he meant. When Prince was at mortal odds with a man he shrank from mention of his name, "and, seeing a chance to show his 'commahnd' again, he gave—him—his ear, and sent me about my business with the customary tip that he would send for me later. Has Belden been to see you?" Prince suddenly queried.

"No," said Ray, then coloring. "He knows, I think, that I'm too short to help him. I suppose that's it."

"Yes," said Prince. "It's a hard case. We're all short in the Forty-Second, except Crab, who could lend it to him ten times over and never feel it, but——"

"And Belden has no clue—no suspicion?"

"Clues and suspicions a plenty, but no proof, no cash. Crab is squeezing him and demanding that he raise the money and pay it over at once. Here come's dinner," he added, as Mrs. Blake's *mozo* appeared, tray-laden, at the rear of the gallery, followed by a pair of native lads, also burdened. They dragged the table to the veranda and deftly, quickly set it, and the two friends took their seats as the

bugles began their sunset call. Crab, for a wonder, had dropped parade, and the flag came down with minor honors only, and darkness seemed almost to come down with it, so short was the tropic twilight. They had finished dinner, were sipping their coffee, and all the time, without a word between them on the subject, each was keeping his watch on Walker's bungalow, marveling that the occupant did not appear, nor had the commanding officer come home to dress for dinner, as was his wont. Prince grew nervous and impatient, and presently took his hat and leave. "Coming over after a while," said he, and vanished. Mrs. Blake's servants, shuffling about in bare, noiseless feet, removed the dishes, replaced the table, and sped away through the gloaming. The commanding officer's house faded in the shadows of the night. The lights at Stanhope's, Fethers's and Mrs. Shane's blinked drowsily. Ray, moving restless about the veranda, eager for news of any kind, called over to Trott, in hope of hearing a friendly hail in reply, but the mess was not yet back from its new refectory, afar over toward the barrio gate, nor had he servant or striker to send a message. In the faint glow that came from Walker's sitting room, a form could be seen flitting about—Hilario, probably, packing the lieutenant's field kit—but where on earth was the lieutenant?

At last a footfall, but toward the rear, not the front, veranda, and Ray, halted at the moment almost

at the edge of the westward flight of steps, turned and gazed. There was a moment of silence, of irresolution, perhaps, then a light tapping. Somebody at Walker's rear doorway was striving to attract attention within. Again the tapping, and still Hilario, in front, seemed to hear nothing. At last the latch clicked. Somebody had gently lifted it, the door swung slowly on its hinges, and that faint glow, issuing from within, fell upon the timid suppliant—a native girl, neatly dressed, as they ever were, shy and reluctant, hovered there, peering within, a little white paper of some kind in her hand. A moment she hesitated as though unwilling and afraid, then slowly entered, and was lost from sight, and almost at the moment Ray heard quick, crunching footsteps on the eastward road, heard them come heavily up the front steps, and saw the light from the open door fall full upon the burly form of Lieutenant Walker, his hat pulled over his eyes. Into the doorway he plunged, the sun-warped boarding creaking under his feet. Ray heard a few gruff words to the servant in the front room, a soft patter upon the kitchen steps as swiftly the dim, girlish form reappeared, darting down and out into the starlit opening, where, instead of homeward, it vanished almost in an instant among the deep shadows of that northward grove. Then there was a moment of bustling to and fro in Walker's sitting room, heavy tread and surly voicing. Then a lamp was carried into the bedroom, and the booted

feet soon followed. Then there was sudden, impatient, angry exclamation, something harsh and profane. Then mutterings of disgust and sounds as of a kick and an overturned chair. Walker was obviously in a pet, and it did not seem much to improve matters that just at the moment a sergeant should rap at the front door with the compliments of the commanding officer, and the escort was ready, and would the lieutenant stop at the adjutant's office before mounting?

"Crab's held up the whole mess," said Prince, reappearing at the moment. "Got 'em corralled at the office, giving 'em unmitigated hell in unimpeachable English. I believe he's more bent on suppressing *that* insurrection than he is the brown insurrectos. I'm worried about Blunt."

"Listen to that," said Ray, with uplifted hand, for another crash in Walker's bedroom, and more bad language, told of continued eruption.

"I know," said Prince, briefly. "He doesn't want to go, and Crab has no business to send him. He's never had independent command. He's never been proved. For all you know or I know he's a coward, with all his blustering ways. He told Crab he couldn't possibly be ready before daybreak, had personal affairs to settle, and Crab gave him till taps to turn over his funds and papers and start. What the devil's wrong with him, do you think"

Ray shook his head. He had his theories, but no facts. His thoughts followed that dusky little hand-

maid to yonder grove. The searchlight of his troubled brain was focussed full on that sylvan rendezvous, "for whispering lovers made," and it revealed nothing. Yet something told him Gertrude Dean was there waiting for this unsoldierly soldier, and waiting in no happy mood. He was glad when Prince turned away. "Crab seems to have forgotten our spat," said he, "in his determination to humble the mess. He orders me to take charge of Walker's company and commissary office in addition to my own duties, and to receipt to Walker for his funds. I'll have to get over to my quarters, or like as not Walker will swear he went there for the purpose and I couldn't be found. See you later, Ray."

The captain's footsteps died away. The still air of the tropic evening brought to Ray's listening ears the low murmur of voices about the post: Mrs. Shane's silvery tones, accosting Prince in quest of news as that efficient but much disgusted officer passed her veranda; Mrs. Stanhope's gentle voice, as she added her inquiry to those of her young and volatile neighbor; Mrs. Cagger's anxious questioning as she, too, came forth, as she did with each new comer, seeking tidings from the columns afield; Mrs. Fethers's aggrieved and petulant "Is Captain Fethers *never* coming home for dinner? Here it is long after eight" (it was by three minutes) "and everything is done to a cinder;" Prince's deep barytone and cheery laugh as he responded. It was one of Prince's the-

ories that one should always wear a smile in the presence of the sex, he being still unmarried. Beyond all these and over in the garrison there was a subdued hum of voices, the tinkle of mandolin and guitar, the shrill snappish neigh and stamping hoof of tethered, pugnacious ponies; beyond these and out in the barrio the persistent and querulous yelp and challenge of the village dogs. Ray turned from them, impatient, irascible, his eyes and thoughts still on those adjacent quarters and the more distant grove. He put the bulk of his house between him and the eastward sounds by again moving to the rear end of that side gallery, tiptoeing, he could not say why, the first few steps; then, stricken with sudden shame, almost stamping the rest of them. Here he could hear the low plashing, the murmurous melody of the sea, and here presently he saw and heard the quick and sudden exit of a dimly defined figure from Walker's rear doorway, heard the quick, impatient footfalls dying away across the sandy waste, saw the faintly outlined form go dancing away toward the dark recesses of the grove, and leaning against the wooden pillar at the end of the gallery, he stood waiting for, he knew not what; he only knew there would be something.

And presently it came.

Afar out over the westward wave, sparkling and billowing under the spangled vault of heaven, there rose, soft and mellow in the distance, then gradually

swelling in volume and resonance, the deep-toned basso profundo of a steamer's whistle, one that Ray had heard many a time before and recognized at once, the deep, vibrant roar of the big belled signal of the Maumee. It meant beyond question news from friends, relief from Manila. It meant possibly even the return of Blake, the colonel, to his own. It meant, how could he help but hope it, a prompt hearing of his grievance, immediate release from durance, and the longed for orders to join his comrades in the field. It meant the downfall of Crab and his absurdities, the restoration of sanity and soldiership, and Ray's heart bounded within him, as the cry of the sentry rang shrill on the air. For the life of him he could not repress the exultant hurrah that burst from his lips and brought half a dozen households to their feet, but that hushed almost as suddenly as it began.

Someone else had heard, someone to whom the sound brought dismay, not rejoicing, someone to whom it spoke of menace, retribution, even vengeance. There came a sudden sound of pleading, of struggle, of fierce threatening and abuse, then a rush of bounding footsteps, a low, despairing, sobbing cry, and Sandy Ray, forgetful of his arrest, forgetful of his aversion, suspicion and shrinking, forgetful of everything but that a woman was in peril or distress and that woman a fragile, delicate and gentle girl—sprang from the veranda, ran swiftly across the intervening glade, and found himself an instant later

bending over a white and senseless heap, then lifting in his strong young arms and bearing to the edge of the timber the fairest burden they had clasped in many a day. Then, as the pallid starlight fell upon that equally pallid, upturned face, he gazed as reason and reluctant brain had warned him, into the reopening, questioning, imploring—then startled and repelling eyes of Gertrude Dean.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was an awakening that night not soon forgotten at Camp Boutelle. The garrison, all but the guard, swarmed out to the beach and stayed there, most of it, until long after midnight, when the last boatload came ashore, and the Maumee, having landed some six score and ten of its martial passenger list, weighed anchor and dropped coastwise down to waiting San Sulpicio, where others of her list, it seems, had business of importance. Just as was to be expected, Colonel Blake was the first to land and to be received with every manifestation of rejoicing and respect by the commanding officer *ad interim*. The two went, together and at once, accompanied by that model staff officer, Captain Fethers, to the colonel's quarters, where, in spite of new anxieties as to her wards and patients, Mrs. Blake had warm welcome and hot supper awaiting them. There was time for no domestic details at the moment. Blake came charged with important duties and instructions, and Crab had a rueful tale in many a painful chapter to unfold. Over these chapters we who may know their contents and can fancy Crab's embarrassment,

may well draw the curtain. Blake had frankly liked Crabtree—had laughed at his little mannerisms, had delighted in his Brittanic mode of speech, but had sturdily insisted that Crab was a tiptop soldier, one who, if ever he had a chance, would prove "a first-class fighting man." But before hearing Crab's detailed account of the situation at the post, Blake launched at once into the projects for the field.

It seems that the isolation of the command at Boutelle had been fully appreciated and understood at Manila, but caused little uneasiness. Blunt, however, even before he was fianlly blocked, had found means to send a messenger by native sail boat to Dagupan, whence the news would be instantly flashed in to the general commanding. Blake, who had been summoned and informed of the raid on San Sulpicio the very hour of the coming of the Pittsburg, was already seeking opportunity to return, when again he was called, this time to hear that Forrest had been attacked and his field hospital crippled, that Crabtree had split up his command, despatching Blunt one way and Cagger another, that it was useless for Forrest to attempt pursuit in the narrow and tortuous mountain trails northward. He should be recalled at once to refit at Boutelle, and then a new expedition would be sent forth, concentrating columns from three or four posts, Blake himself to take the field, meantime supporting Blunt, reopening the road and repairing the line. Before midnight Fethers had

written out the orders, while Blake was listening to Crabtree's halting and embarrassed recital.

"Has Walker gone?" he presently interrupted.

"Left at 9:30, sir, with Sergeant Butts and six men, all we could spare."

Blake stepped to the balcony and gazed out over the starlit bay. A mile from shore lay the Maumee, her riding lights sending long pencils of dancing fire landward across the deep. The colonel seemed plunged in thought a moment. "We met the Formosa," said he, "and heard something of what had been happening. We brought customs officers to investigate Dean's affairs. I fancied, somehow, that Walker would be needed as a witness."

"We can reach him at town, sir," was the prompt answer. "That is, if the Maumee goes over to-night. He is not to leave there until dawn." And as he spoke Crabtree was ruefully wondering how much the Formosa had told the returning commander. Then he bethought him of Mrs. Blake's letters that Cowper had ordered "fetched aft," and that he would have been glad indeed to intercept and hold; but while as commanding officer, in the interests of good order and discipline, Crab might to himself have justified the act, he could not as a gentleman, once of Her Majesty's service, so act except upon that plea. Thinking now of that letter, his heart sank. Blake, of course, must know all about Ray and the mess and everything, Blake must have heard a woman's prejudiced

and biased report, and Crab had so hoped to keep ever in the good graces of that most popular colonel. It was impossible, however, from Blake's manner, to ascertain whether or not he had been informed. He was precisely as courteous as ever before, and just now seemed thinking only what to do in Walker's case. "Let him go," he presently said. "If needed he can be recalled. They won't finish this investigation in a hurry." Then, turning quickly: "And now, Crabtree, what mounts have you left? We must send couriers after Forrest and we *should* send an officer with a few men."

"Mr.—Ray is here," ventured Crab, "but I regret to say I found it necessary to place him in arrest."

"Tell me about it," said Blake, briefly, and Crabtree told, and told it fairly. Fethers, sitting silently by, nervously tapping his teeth with his pencil, could not but declare later that Crab set nothing down in malice, even though he naught extenuated. Blake listened without a word until Crabtree had finished.

"Ray cannot go," said he briefly, though, as he told himself, "it's only to order them back." "Who else have you?"

"Mr. Trott, Mr. Beld——"

"Notify Trott to get ready," said Blake, briefly, to Fethers, and the adjutant left.

"We'll talk of Ray's case, and other matters, in the morning," continued the colonel, in quiet tone. "First let's settle the field business. I fear these young fel-

lows have been playing because their old cat was away."

"That is just the way I should put it, colonel," in his relief and joy and to Blake's infinite delight and subsequent merriment, cried Crabtree, almost venturing to seize his commander's hand. "I—I have positively no feeling in the matter, colonel. We simply disagreed and—he forgot himself. I—er—expected him to come down and to his senses by this time, but I haven't seen—he hasn't asked permission to see me."

"He will very shortly," said Blake. "Let us get back to business.'

And all this time Sandy Ray, an anxious and troubled man, was pacing his veranda and wondering what the upshot would be. He had rushed to the aid of a maiden in distress, and she had practically rebuked and disowned him. He had resigned her, angering and even insolent in manner, to the native damsel so attached to her, and the two, the lily white maiden and the native girl, had gone wearily away homeward, leaving Ray to return to his quarters and senses.

Prince the third time came over to cheer and bear him company. "I don't envy poor Crab his task tonight," said he. "Yet you ought to have seen him greet the colonel. You would have thought he'd been praying for his return for weeks. Anything new, Ray?" he questioned, suddenly, for Ray looked older

and graver and even more troubled than when he left him two hours before.

"Nothing—new, I suppose," was the weary answer. "Only I hadn't—fully grasped the situation, perhaps."

Prince eyed him, sharply.

"See—Walker—again before he left?"

"Only—over yahnduh," and a nod over his shoulder as Ray drew his pipestem from his lips, conveyed all he desired to tell on that subject. Prince lowered himself into the biggest of the wicker chairs. Ray was something of a puzzle to him. Obviously more of a gentleman than most of the mess, he had early attracted the captain's attention. Prince cared little for garrison society and it cared little more for him. He looked upon the sex as a disturbing element in the army, lovely and alluring, perhaps, like the Rhine maidens of the Lorelei, but equally to be avoided. He had deep respect for such women as Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Stanhope. He had less for such as Mrs. Fethers, who had money of her own, and gowns and things, that promoted envy and emulation among other women and expense and worry for their husbands. He had no respect at all, and stood utterly at odds with the pretty, laughing, teasing little women of the Mrs. Shane type. They were at the bottom, said Prince, of most of the bits of devilment that came to his notice. Prince was yet to be reconstructed, for bachelorhood with him was not really a

matter of choice. His sister, who was a widow, and that sister's children, needed most of his means and kept him poor. But Prince had taken a fancy to Ray, and Ray piqued both his curiosity and interest. Little as Prince liked Walker, personally, before being hurled off Walker's veranda, and much as he hated him now, he meant to hold him to strict accountability. Prince at the moment was powerless to act as he desired. Crab had his suspicions, Crab was watching. Crab possibly had picked Walker to go in order to prevent further collision at the post. Crab had even sent for and informed the captain that it was his, the commanding officer's, wish, that he, Prince, be present at the office when Walker turned over his funds. Crabtree had designated Fethers to receive and receipt for them finally, and for the life of him Prince could not imagine why Crabtree insisted on his presence, unless it be that he suspected that Walker would be found short.

But at the appointed hour, when Fethers and Prince together reluctantly left the beach and the contemplation of the still far distant lights of the Maumee, they found Walker in readiness at the commissary office. The sergeant set before them the papers and Walker the money. At the exchange office a similar ceremony was gone through, Fethers silently counting and signing, Prince silently looking on. Then Walker turned and, for the first time, his eyes met those of the victim in the morning's clash, and

they met squarely with unmitigated enmity, if not hate, in both.

"And now, cap," said Walker, "I'm ordered to turn the company fund over to you," at which piece of Bowery boy insolence Prince's cheeks burned to the temples, "and I do it *here* because neither to-night nor any time do I want you in my quarters. You butted in there this morning."

"Not a word of that, Mr. Walker!" cried Fethers, springing instantly between them. "My orders are to arrest you if you—— No, captain, I beg of you," he continued, warning the senior back with his hand. "Here, Walker, sit there and count out your cash. Prince, just step outside one moment. I'll count and verify, you can sign," and so, half persuading, half pushing, the adjutant parted the would-be combatants. Prince, fuming, strode the piazza a moment or two. Walker presently came plunging forth and went straightway to his detachment. Ten minutes later Fethers had sent him all his receipts and, much to the unspoken surprise of at least three men in garrison, Walker's accounts were cleared ere he left the limits of Camp Boutelle.

But Prince was still hot when, after another half hour at the beach, trying to cool off, he returned to Ray, alone and anxious. The sound of little parties marching in and being distributed about the barracks had roused his curiosity for the moment, but Trott, hurrying by, had explained that these were merely

the convalescents and other men left back at Manila, every available soldier being now sent to his station. Something was surely afoot, though Trott knew nothing more than that he was to go at dawn with orders recalling Forrest and Cagger from the mountains, and that the colonel "had business." Business for all hands, thought Sandy, and I still in arrest! Smoking was another thing he had almost abandoned, yet in his nervousness to-night the old pipe was a solace, and he was puffing away when Prince found him. Each had something uppermost in his mind and each longed to broach it, yet shrank. Each had reason to think ill of Walker, and so thinking had until lately spoken freely, but now, with additional and damning reason, each was silent.

It was Ray who questioned at last.

"Did you see the colonel—did you go to his quarters?"

"I did, indeed! He made me, in fact. He told Fethers to tell me to come up, and I stayed as much as ten minutes, too, more to bother Crab than anything else, for I know they had business."

"See—Mrs. Blake?"

"No, she was very busy with Mrs. Dean and—and the daughter. Sick again, possibly. That Filipino girl was doing a good deal of bustling about from room to room. The new doctor is with them. He was hardly off the ship when he was called to the

colonel's. They sent him and six hospital corps men on the Maumee. Looks like field work, doesn't it?"

"Of course," said Sandy, disgustedly, "now that I'm in limbo."

"Bosh, man, don't bother about that, now that Blake is here he'll bring Crab to his senses, and you'll be out in plenty of time. Only—I wish you might have had the chance of that—that—cad yonder."

Ray heaved himself out of his chair, puffing nervously at his briar, and again began pacing the floor. For a man who had been at Boutelle little over a week, it seemed to him he had never known a post with so many possibilities for sensation, he hated to say scandal, all centering in one soldier and that soldier's dupes and victims. But such proofs as Ray had of that soldier's wrongdoing, or inexplicable doings, were not such proofs as he felt it possible to use. He could not understand how a girl for whom Mrs. Blake felt such affection and regard—in whom he, in spite of all he had seen and heard and suspected, felt such indefinable interest, and for whom, in spite of himself, he felt such strange, unwelcome attraction—could be influenced by and drawn to that ill-bred, coarse-fibred fellow whose very look at a woman was insult. He knew that Prince must be thinking of Walker just as he thought. He knew that Prince had seen and heard things that made him think ill of the girl, think worse of her perhaps than Ray himself, who knew or thought he knew so much

more. He could not bring himself to talk with a man he had known so short a time, much as he liked him, of a girl he had known even less a time, and of whom he thought he had learned so many things, little, as he persuaded himself, he liked or respected her. Yet he was eager to talk, eager to explain, eager even to extenuate. He longed to hear from Prince's lips that Prince disbelieved the evidence of his own senses, for what Sandy Ray practically longed to believe was that his own senses had maligned her.

And while he was pacing the floor, glancing fitfully at his companion the while, the latter suddenly put up a hand and slowly worked himself out of the depths of that easy chair and thence to the open door. It was then a little after midnight and even the snarling and yelping of the village dogs had ceased. A profound silence had fallen on the garrison, though once in a while a low murmur of voices rose above the soft monotone of the surf along the sandy concave of the shore. Certain stores, it seems, were still being rafted through the little breakers. Certain detachments were still at work; but even these voices had ceased as though every one had suddenly struck work and stopped to listen to some other sound, strange and dominant, that compelled their attention. Prince had tiptoed to the gallery without and Sandy followed. And then it came again, and from the direction of the colonel's quarters—a scream, at sound of which both men sprang from the rear steps and then, in

amazement, halted short, confounded. The scream suddenly changed to a peal of weird, shrill, unearthly laughter, that rang out on the night and roused the barrio dogs to instant and responsive yelps and challenge—a laugh that in spite of tragic import reminded Ray of nothing on earth so much as the wild chorus of the prairie wolves in the old days of his army boyhood. The two men stood gazing at each other in bewilderment a moment, then the captain spoke:

"My God, man; don't you know what that is? It's a woman in hysterics!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Another day had come. Blake had resumed command. Trott had cantered away to the recall of Forrest, a little squad of the Forty-Second in his wake. Prince had been sent for and notified to be in readiness to march his company to reinforce Blunt's detachment, and to take over the command. There was significance in this. It meant that the veteran colonel of cavalry, who had spent long years in conflict with savage tribesmen, considered Lieutenant Walker too little experienced for so responsible a duty. It might mean even more, but if so no hint escaped the colonel's lips. Prince had come straight to Sandy to tell him the news and to say that he had gone so far as to suggest to Colonel Blake that, as he had no subaltern of his own, and as some sixty men were to go with him, and another officer would be desirable, and Mr. Ray was—unemployed, he would be more than glad to have him. So far from snubbing him, Blake had looked pleased. "It is just because I have known Ray so long and have reason to be so—fond of him, having no son of my own," said he, "that I cannot release him from arrest until Captain Crabtree has had time to—reconsider the case. As yet we

have had other and more important matters to occupy us. Tell Ray for me that he must be patient."

"It's just what I said all along," cried poor Sandy. "It's a handicap for me to be under Blake at all. If I should happen to do anything worth mentioning, though it might tickle him to death and he'd write beautifully to Dad about it, he'd shut me out of his report for fear he might overstate my services. I'm damned if I don't wish I'd been promoted to the Farmers." By which descriptive, with no disrespect to the agricultural classes be it said, Mr. Ray and his comrades referred to a certain newly organized regiment of Horse that stood not high in the estimation of other commands.

So another expedition was to start, and no Sandy with it, all through the absurd conceits of that bumptious, impossible, impracticable, un-American *pro tempore* accident of a commanding officer! swore the army bred boy in his disgust. He begged Fethers to beg the colonel to give him a hearing in presence of Captain Crabtree, if he pleased, at the earliest possible hour, and had been up at reveille, and astir ever since, in hopes of a summons. Blake, too, was up with the sun, he and the new doctor coming forth from that rear gateway together, talking gravely and earnestly as they passed the quarters and on into the garrison. It was soon learned that the doctor had spent the night at the colonel's; that it was on account of Mrs. Dean, who had received news of her husband of such

a character as to throw her into hysterics, and in low hysterical condition she had remained all night, Mrs. Blake and Gertrude alternating in watch over her, with the native girl ever hovering about. Up to the hour of guardmounting, however, Sandy Ray could not imagine the nature of the tidings that so prostrated the unhappy woman; then, when told by Dr. Morton himself, for the two were well known to each other in Manila, Ray could not in the least comprehend her. It seems that Mrs. Dean had asked to see the doctor upon his arrival, and then surprised him by anxiously inquiring for her husband.

"I expected to find him here," was Morton's answer, whereupon, wild eyed, she sat up in bed and demanded:

"You surely saw him on the Formosa! Captain Cowper promised—— You surely cannot mean he was not aboard!" To which the much perturbed practitioner answered reluctantly that he had every reason to believe Mr. Dean was not aboard, in fact, that he had a letter from Captain Cowper for her. This she demanded at once, and read by the light of Paloma's lamp, and then fell back in hysterics. The poor creature, said Morton, had been struggling so long against fate that she had utterly broken down.

"But why on earth should it matter so very much whether he succeeded in reaching the Formosa?" was Sandy's query. "And why should Cowper have been expecting him, and where could he be, and why, now

that it was fairly well guarded and secure from attack, should he not be at Sulpicio? Why, if able to be about at all, should he not be there, straightening out his tangled affairs and getting matters into shape? His safe was there in the midst of the ruins, guarded by the detachment. His brave boy slept there under the new-made mound near the big stone church. His wife and daughter were in better hands by far than when under his own roof. It was his business to be there! And then the doctor mentioned those silent civil officers of the law and the customs, and their mission at San Sulpicio, and then it dawned upon Ray that Dean perhaps preferred a refuge in the wilderness or far at sea to a rencontre with them. A little later he was sure of it.

At ten Prince and his sixty trudged away, leaving Belden seated gloomily with Ray, and now at last they had reason to hope the colonel would send for and see these aggrieved young gentlemen—both, in different ways, victims of the Crabtree administration. It was Belden who had the first audience, and a long one it proved, for Blake had many a question to ask, and note to make. It was long after eleven when Belden returned, finding Ray curiously studying a parcel brought in but a moment before by Prince's house boy. Ray crumpled a note in his hand and stowed the packet in a pigeonhole at Belden's approach, coloring a bit at the hurried incivility of the proceeding, but Belden hardly noted.

"Ray," said he, "some of that stolen mess money has been found here at the post, but—there ain't time to tell you. The colonel wants to see you."

Then oddly Ray faltered, turned back, took the packet from the pigeonhole, and begging Belden's pardon, locked it in his trunk. "Something of—Prince's," he explained, then went his way.

Something told him Crabtree would be there to witness the coming interview and there he was, seated at the side, not the front, of the desk, and to Sandy's surprise the captain greeted him with a very frank and civil "Good morning, Mr. Ray," which he hardly knew how to answer, and so compromised on a half bow. Speak he could not. It was the colonel who did that:

"I have sent for you, Mr. Ray" (how odd it sounded! yet it must always be so on duty, thought Sandy), "to say that as long as twelve hours ago Captain Crabtree expressed his desire that you should be released from arrest. It was I who kept you in. The absence at this moment of so many who were participants in this recent—demonstration—at the mess, makes it impossible to investigate now, but as commander of the regiment I am bound to tell you I regret that you had even a passive part in it—that when, in my opinion, you should have thrown your influence against it, you were silent."

This was hard to bear and Ray's eyes began to blink, his lips to twitch. Stand and take it he must

and without a protest. Yet he longed to interpose a word. He was amazed when Crabtree did that for him.

"I—I crave your pardon, Colonel Blake," said he, with infinite deference of manner, "but possibly *I* misled you. I wish to say right here that so far from taking part in the original demonstration, I believe Mr. Ray disapproved it. Then when I thought him —accessory—to a piece of—feminine impertinence, he promptly denied it, and—and with right. It was in what followed that I felt compelled to—assert myself and restrain Mr. Ray. That object acomplished I can have no desire to press matters, and—uh—er—therefore would, myself, have released Mr. Ray within the statutory limit. Our—our subsequent difference, sir, was rather—personal—than official."

Sandy was confounded. This was anything but what he had looked for at the hands of this much berated captain. He strove to speak, as Blake's deep-lined visage seemed to invite, but the choke in his throat was too much for him, and the colonel saw it.

"Here," said he, rising from his chair, "I have known you from babyhood," and he placed a long, lean hand on Sandy's shoulder, "and I've known you, captain, less than three months, but I'm mightily mistaken in both of you if after such a piece of magnanimity you two cannot settle this matter far better and quicker than I can. Your arrest is ended, Sandy, but—not your duty." Then, noting the hot tears

springing to the young soldier's eyes, "Come and dine with us this evening, both of you. Now I'll leave you to yourselves."

But that dinner was deferred. At one o'clock there had come a little note from Mrs. Blake, just such a kind, helpful word as Aunt Nan could be counted on to write, rejoicing in the release and reconciliation, and the prospect of seeing them that evening—"though I wish our household were not so distracted, with Mrs. Dean worse and Gertrude worn out with grief and worry." At four o'clock came the mozo, panting, with a message. "La Señora Coronel—deséa al—instante—el Señor Teniente," and Sandy dropped his pen and the letter to his father and went almost on the run.

He found his kind friend at the head of the stairway. Gertrude had worse news of her father. "He is desperately ill at a native village beyond Sulpicio—only a few miles. She and Paloma start at once, and, Sandy, I can't let that child go—with no other protection."

"Shall I?" was all he said.

"*Will* you?" said Aunt Nannie.

"I'll be ready in ten minutes," was the answer, as he ran down the steps. From the lower court he called to her. "By saddle—or boat?"

"By sail. It's out there now, with two native boatmen. She knows enough of the language, if you don't."

One other question occurred to him before he sped away leaving it unasked. "Would *she* wish it?" Probably not, but that did not weigh with him now. Aunt Nan wished it. He—yes—he wished it. The sea breeze, if it held, would surely waft them to their destination by seven or eight. The guard at Sulpicio would then be but five or six miles. Help could be had from there if need be. Hurriedly he closed his letter; tossed a few traps into his haversack, thought a moment, then carefully stowed with them Prince's little packet, buckled on his cartridge belt and revolver, slung poucho and blanket over his arm, and in twenty minutes was at the landing, looking over the queer craft that was to be their transport. There it tossed on the ebbing tide, its nose in the sand, its stern washed by the restless little breakers, barely twenty feet long and a yard wide, with long, elastic outriggers lashed securely inboard, and bearing at their extremity a twelve foot bundle of stalks by way of float or balance. Two uprights of tough bamboo supported flapping lateen sails. Two half naked Tagalogs dawdled against the bow, every now and then shoving a few inches sternward so as to keep their banca from sticking fast on the beach. Amidship was heaped some matting and zacate grass, and to this Sandy pointed as he handed his burden to the silent boatman. Then down came Moon and his spouse with substantial store of bottles, boxes and vans, that were stowed well forward. Then came the

colonel himself, with a few words aside to Ray. Much as he disapproved of Dean, Blake had deep sympathy for his family and was sending his choicest and best in charge of them. "There's a lagoon behind a long sand spit," said he, "a mile beyond Sulpicio, and this takes you almost directly to the barrio where Dean is laid by the heels. They counted on his going by the Formosa to Manila, it seems. He had made them believe he had funds and money at his command there—perhaps he has—among the smuggling gang, and I'm betting my future stars he's simply got drunk and couldn't be boated out to her—and has been there in hiding ever since. No wonder he's sick! He'll be sicker still when the revenue crowd lay hands on him, and *that's* something his daughter doesn't know. I'll send Hilario to town, with her note to the convent people, and they will send nurse, and Sisters of Charity, or what all—so you can rest easy."

And then, presently, with a score of natives, stolidly, curiously, looking on, with No. 6 and a corporal watching from the gate, but not another soul of the garrison, there came the native girl Paloma, bearing an old valise of the colonel's and a gossamer raincoat. A quick glance of recognition passed between her and the nearest boatman as she transferred her burden to him. A quick look of apprehension shot into her eyes at sight of the young officer. She even recoiled a step, then suddenly turned to meet her young mis-

tress, coming slowly, with Mrs. Blake's arm about her slender form, with her swimming eyes fixed on the gentle face of her benefactress.

Something prompted Ray, instead of stepping forward to assist her into the boat, to fall back and leave that duty to his colonel, but it is doubtful if Gertrude could have seen him through the mist of tears. She seemed to see no one but Mrs. Blake. Clasping in both her own the firm, white hand of her friend, she never for an instant removed her gaze from the sweet and sympathetic eyes that bent upon her such a world of compassion and tenderness. There was something imploring, something incomprehensible, something almost unearthly in that piteous scrutiny. It seemed as though there was in the heart of the girl a passionate longing to throw herself into Aunt Nannie's clasping arms and sob out some burning secret upon her breast. Watching her intently, Ray was appalled at the grief, the suffering, in that pallid, yet beautiful face. At last they reached the wet sands about the prow, and Mrs. Blake for a moment glanced fearfully about, first at the fragile craft, then at the placid November skies. Typhoon and tropic stormtime had passed. All aloft was sweet and serene. The face of the waters was well-nigh as unruffled as that of the cloudless heavens. The far distant sweep of the southward shore seemed but a league or two away, and Sulpicio's gray towers loomed sharp and clear against the dark background of the banana grove be-

yond. All nature spoke of peace and security. Only here in this girlish bosom was there storm and stress.

The colonel bent forward to aid her aboard, signalling as he did so to the bare-legged Filipino lads hovering curiously about them. Into the brine they plunged at his nod, bounding over the bamboo braces and grasping the narrow footboard that skirted the gunwales. It were best to cut this parting short if the voyagers were to reach even Sulpicio before nightfall. But now, as Blake would have lifted her over the bow, Gertrude, with one low, sobbing cry, turned and threw herself upon Nannie's breast. "Mrs. Blake, Mrs. Blake!" she moaned, "you have been so good, oh, so good to us—to us all, and I—I—oh, *what* have I done!"

Then in the passion and abandon of her grief, or shame or misery, or all combined, she would have slipped from those fond, circling arms and flung herself prostrate at her feet. But, more firmly they clasped her, more fondly the soft lips pressed their kiss upon the pillowed head, upon the beautiful, rippling, tumbled hair and murmured their words of caution, of encouragement. "Hush, Gertrude, hush, child. Keep your strength. Think of your father and his need——"

"Oh, it is that—that—and Harry——" wailed the girl, in her wild abandonment. "It is that—only—that can plead for me!"

And again, almost sternly now, "Hush!" said Mrs. Blake, with a warning glance at Ray and a quick gesture to her husband.

"In with you, quick, Paloma!" whispered Blake, and the agile native girl was aboard at a bound, then turned and held forth her hands. Gently the colonel unclasped the white arms from the neck of his wife and drew the shrinking form to his side. Another moment and he had stooped and, quick and sure, lifted it with one powerful swing over outrigger, footboard and gunwale, heedless of hissing spray and lapping waves, and all in that moment, with her head in Paloma's lap, the sobbing child lay nestling on the low grass heap amidship. Ray sprang quickly over the bow. A swarm of native boys sent the light craft shooting through the sparkling breakers till she rode with unfettered prow. The paddles in the lean brown hands dipped and flashed, the waters foamed and eddied before the plunging blades, the keen stem swung around to the south, the pointed sails filled and bellied in the landward wind, and the forefoot clove the murmuring ripples, tossing the white crests aside, and Gertrude, lifting head and hand in fond adieu, waved one last and lingering farewell to the fading forms upon the shore, but dimly seen through the flood of tears, then buried her face again to sob her heart out on Paloma's knee, all unconscious of the troubled gaze of the young soldier crouching at the

foot of the foremast, and for her sake and that of the gentle woman who had taken her to heart and home, driving swift into the shadows of the coming night and the thick of new perils he must meet, unaided and alone.

CHAPTER XX.

The sun had set below the westward wave and the red glow still tinged the summit of San Sulpicio's twin towers as the long canoe-like banca, speeding on its way, at last headed for a still distant point upon the shore. Far out to sea, a speck upon the horizon, the Maumee was vanishing toward Manila. Ray, who had crept a little forward where the low-hung sail would not impede his view, marveled a bit that their dusky helmsman should have kept so far out, sailing aslant into the wind instead of coasting closer. The frail craft was only built for lagoon and river service, with a possible flit along shore when the sea was still, but it was taking chances in any weather to venture such a distance from land. Two miles of dancing water lay between them and the glistening walls of the town, as they shot athwart the rippling ribbon of light, stretching between Sulpicio's shore line and the glowing disk at the horizon. Not until far beyond possibility of shot or signal did their pilot change her course. Once or twice a word or two had been exchanged between the two, captain and crew. Once or twice a long, lean, brown arm in the bows

had pointed to some object on the shore, and then had flashed a glance of intelligence. But these were men employed by friends of Dean—men whom his daughter trusted and Paloma seemed to know. There was nothing for Ray to do until once more landed. There was nothing to really cause him to think of treachery. Indeed he was thinking of something very different, wondering how long it would be before Gertrude Dean became aware of his presence, when, rising to her knees and scanning the palm-skirted beach to the south and east, she suddenly looked, all unprepared and unsuspecting, straight into his eyes. Almost on the instant her look turned to challenge, and sudden color flew to the face that had been so wan and white. Bending low, the young officer crept beneath the foresail and steadied himself at the mast. The breeze had slackened with the going down of the sun, and the gentle sea was heaving by in low, lazy billows to the shore. The banca no longer careened to the wind, but dipped idly with each successive swell. Paloma, seated with her back to the bow, saw the instant change in the eyes of her young mistress and needed no explanation. Ray was the first to speak, and he was at a loss what to say.

"You can charge this to Colonel and Mrs. Blake, Miss Dean," said he. "I'm here practically 'by order.'"

There was no reply for a moment. When it came there was nothing conciliatory, to say the least.

"They should not have put you to the trouble—on my account."

"They both feared it might be dark before you reached your father," he managed to explain.

"I have Paloma, who has been with me often—after dark."

"Yes, I know, but——" then Sandy stopped in sudden confusion. The vivid flush had been fading. Now it blazed again. What on earth possessed him to make so awkward an admission? Then, a second thought. Well, why not? since he knew that, not once only, but thrice at least, she had been flitting by night through that mysterious grove and on those mysterious missions—since he knew that she sought out or followed that good-looking but objectionable youth, his next door neighbor? And she who had been guilty of such unmaidenly conduct, and perhaps of other misdemeanor, was now assuming rebukeful airs over him who had come as her guard and escort. Up and back went the curly, dark head at the instant. He had still much of the boy about him.

"I shall intrude as little as possible," said he briefly, "and shall only be in your way an hour or so after you find your father."

The name brought her back to her senses and her grief. Of course, he wasn't to blame for coming, and it was like Mrs. Blake to insist on her having an escort, and it would be, moreover, a help and comfort to her to have an officer near by in her extremity.

lips might have found it possible to say she
ıed it were any one rather than Mr. Ray, but her
't refused its sanction. She knew better. She
w that her grievance against this old and dear
nd of her benefactress was that he alone, of all the
ers that she had met and known, refused her the
›luntary homage all men pay a pretty girl, and
sympathy, friendliness—something—that should
e been promptly accorded one in such strait and
ress as she. Could it be that Mr. Ray was jeal-
of the fondness and welcome Mrs. Blake had so
›ly given? Even in all her grief and anxiety
'trude Dean had so much of the woman in her
t she meant to bring this young gallant to a realiz-
sense of his misconduct, and that right soon. But
in the crew was pointing southwestward now, and
was growing darker, and Paloma's dusky face
ıed anxious and perplexed. The crew was saying
ıething to the combined skipper and steersman
t even Paloma could not understand—something
t caused the latter to bend low, peering under the
insail, and to study eagerly the long line of dis-
t, sandy shore toward which the long, lazy rollers
'e slowly bearing them. Then he, too, spoke, sud-
›ly and low, and Paloma's eyes took on a shade of
per anxiety. Ray could not see her face. She
› murmuring something in Spanish, and the look
› speedily reflected in that of her young mistress.
neant trouble, perhaps new trouble, of some kind,

and in the presence of common danger personal differences had to be ignored.

"Is anything wrong?" he asked, in cautious tone. "You will have to take me into the family confidences for the time being."

And though it sounded flippant, and she marked it on her mental tablets for future retribution, Miss Dean felt the need of counsel and promptly answered.

"They both speak Tagalog—Paloma's dialect, but now they're using Ilocano. She thinks they don't wish her to understand, and she is pretending not to, but every now and then there is a word she knows. They are looking for signals on shore."

Ray glanced at the fast fading walls of San Sulpicio, now nearly three miles away to the northeast. In ten minutes all would be darkness, and the time had surely come for them to seek the mouth of the long lagoon of which the colonel spoke. They should even now be opposite, yet the prow was pointed southward still. The sea, not the shallow estuary, was to be their road unless all indications failed.

"Tell her to ask why we do not head for the lagoon," he said, and presently, in answer to the query of the girl, the helmsman pointed to the dim point below them and used but a single word.

"He says there are signals ahead," came Gertrude's translation.

"How far south of town is Mr. Dean supposed to be?"

"Five or six miles, at a little hamlet they call Bató, It is close to the sea, under a cliff."

Ray turned and looked again under the foresail. Stars were beginning to peep through the eastward heavens. The shore could barely be distinguished. Here and there a twinkling, firefly light began to show against the black fringe of forest, and these he eagerly scanned. There was now barely enough of breeze to fill the sails, and the frosty foam that broke under the sharp bows had dwindled away to a murmuring ripple. One light, far to the left front, as the shadows deepened, seemed to glow and grow with more insistence, and as Ray studied it, watching the bow man the while, even to redden with menace. Twice the crouching native glanced quickly back over his shoulder, but at sight of the keen eyes fixed upon him in soldier scrutiny, turned instanter to the front again and feigned to busy himself with his paddle.

"Miss Dean," presently queried Sandy, "has—Paloma been with you long? Does she understand English?"

"Ever since our first week at Manila. A very little," was the brief reply. It was not the first case he had heard of—of deep attachment on part of native girl to American mistress. The poor creatures had known what servitude meant when the Spaniards ruled the islands. American rule seemed no rule at all, and the women understood it and rejoiced in it

quicker than did the men, who were forever suspicious of deep laid plot or treachery. Ray's own senses had told him something of Paloma's almost dog-like devotion. Mrs. Blake had told him more. He had ripe reason to know that mistress and maid were well nigh inseparable. Therefore, did he scoff at the idea of plot, collusion or complicity shared by Paloma at the expense of the fair and gentle creature she served. Yet Paloma seemed at first to know these coastwise mariners.

"What does she say—or think—of these boatmen?"

"She saw them often on the beach at Sulpicio. One of them, the helmsman, worked for father. She does not know what to think. Mr.—Mr. Ray, my eyes are not strong, do you see no lights about town?—and none on shore nearer than that?" and she indicated the very point which he had so curiously been studying.

"Hardly a spark about town, while this light ahead is strong."

"I ask because Paloma says that seems beyond Bató, and the boatman insists it isn't."

Ray pondered a moment. The flitting lights to the left and front speedily faded. Only that one remained strong and steadfast over the bows, vanishing from sight every time the banca slid into the shallow dip between the long, low billows, then, rising again, serene and radiant, as the prow lifted to

the heave of the following swell. The sails were flapping idly now. There seemed no wind from any quarter. The stars shone brightly in the slowly warping mirror of the deep, and the soft, rythmic plash of the paddle seemed to lull suspicion and soothe to slumber, but Sandy noted that the dark girl's eyes were ever on that steersman, squatting at the stern, plying his blade with slow, noiseless sweep, ever and anon bending double and searching the spangled face of the waters. Plainly both mistress and maid had new anxiety to add to the weight of care and distress with which they started.

"What reason does he give for heading below the barrio?" muttered Ray "Let Paloma ask him."

And presently the question was put in the Tagalog tongue. Promptly was it answered, and yet Paloma hesitated in her translation. The steersman claimed that the little lights were made by "bad men," hoping to lure them into the lagoon. He was defeating their purpose by heading for the southern entrance, Bató lay just this side of it. That light was set by his friends, and the Señor Dean's, to bring them safely to the village. It seemed plausible. What could Sandy say? but he slowly drew the revolver and tested springs and cylinder.

Dark and darker grew the night. Their watery path was now illumined only by the sentinel stars and that steadily glowing beacon over the bows. But for this latter Ray would have declared they made

...s past sundown
the hour, opened his wa
match. It was one of t
It flared up like miniatu
dwindled to a mere glow,
craft was illumined from
stant later, out from the
pered by distance, came th
able United States.

"Hullo-o-o! Boat ahoy

Sandy sprang to his fee
Straining his eyes he gaze
direction of the hail, and hi
and tutored in hours of mou
squadrons, now rang out over

"Hullo-o-o yourself! Wh
light!"

So intent were the three pa
for answer, that only one gav
Even Paloma only casually n
The dusky ...

are you?" But not a word, not an articulate sound, was heard in reply. Sound of some kind there was, dull and muffled—a sound as of scurry and struggle and fierce muttering and swift footfalls, but all so faint, so indistinct that, even in the breathless hush of the tropic night, their ears might never have noted had not every nerve been called into action by that confident, familiar Yankee hail. Ray called again at top of his voice, and got not a syllable of response. The next thing he realized was that the beacon light, for which they had been steering, was now no longer over the bows, but square abeam. A moment more and it, too, began suddenly to wane, to flicker, to sink. The luring balefire was being drenched, the lurking gang upon the shore had no welcome for craft whence issued the unexpected challenge, the ring and command of a soldier voice. It was the last thing the watchers had hoped to hear.

"There's devil's work there of some kind," said Ray, his teeth setting hard, his hand on the butt of his Colt. "Tell Paloma to ask why he shifted." The words had the crisp, sudden accent of command, not pleading, and Gertrude heard and obeyed, and softened to him for the voice that hardened.

"Ladrones! Mucho malo!" was the prompt reply.

"There was an American there," insisted Ray. "Were there any among your father's—associates—down here?"

"Two," faltered Gertrude. "Not all the time, but

—but Harry found——" and then the fair head was buried again in mingled grief and shame.

"They would not be with ladrones, no matter what —other," he broke off suddenly. It was no time to refer to their probable occupation. An American being there, Dean and Bató ought to be somewhere close at hand. That American had hoped the light at sea meant relief for their invalid, and before any one could interpose, he had hailed. Then when the answer came, instant and authoritative, it had brought dread to his associates, whoever they were, and discomfiture, if nothing worse, to him. It was one of the smugglers' haunts, then, reasoned Sandy, and his voice had suggested revenue officers and reprisals, and all this time the father might be needing the daughter as the daughter was longing for the father. Ray had come with no search warrant, no hostile intent. They need not fear him, and he had no fear of them. "Here, you," he ordered, turning sharply on the native, crouching, paddle in hand, in the bows, "ask for Señor Dean!"

Then went out over the sluggish billows the high-pitched, tremulous Tagalog voice, in shrill staccato, but it lacked conviction, and no answer came. "You!" ordered Ray, whirling on the dim form at the stern. "Tell him, Paloma."

And presently another native gave tongue, in tones more confident, and still the first reply was the faint echo, shrilling feebly back from some unseen height

beyond the shore. The low plash of the little breakers at the strand was for half a minute the only other sound. Then at last a voice, a woman's voice, at which Gertrude and Paloma both started and would have sprung to their feet, came wailing across the water. *"Señor Dean aqui—muy malo!"*

And then the daughter turned for the first time fairly upon her soldier defender.

"Oh, Mr. Ray, he is there! That is a voice I know well. Call, Paloma. Say we're coming at once."

Then the dark girl's voice was again uplifted and quickly a dim light glowed upon the shore, a light that speedily grew stronger, yet somehow did not glow as did that beacon they had been following. "Pull for the shore," said Sandy, in the words of a Moody and Sankey they had often sung in old days on the plains. "I'm blessed if I know what's behind all this, but—it isn't my funeral," he muttered to himself. Then as Paloma transmitted the order and slowly, reluctantly the banca's head swung round and the paddles dipped again, Ray's thought whimsically followed the words, "though it may be my funeral before I'm done with it."

Then more lights showed and voices sounded and a torch or two waved, and presently dim forms appeared, torch-bearing, and the banca shoved her lean stem into a narrow cove that quickly shallowed and left them stranded, and the dusky forms leaped in and lined the gunwales. The sharp prow was run

upon the pebbly beach. A native girl held forth welcoming hands to the fragile form amidship, and Ray helped swing them ashore, mistress and maid—saw them swallowed up in an eager little swarm of villagers, and wafted away presumably to the hut where lay the suffering man. There was nothing left for him to do but order the unloading of the stores and supplies. Somebody would doubtless come for them, and there would be no further need—or thought—for him.

Several native boys still clustered about. He peered around him in search of the American whose voice had been heard—farther up shore that must have been—but no American was visible, no man, in fact, for these slender, sinewy little brownskins were mere lads of less than sixteen. He needed to arrange with his Tagalog mariners to take him back to Camp Boutelle, but they only shook their heads and would not understand. He asked for the *Jefe,* the chief—or the *Presidente,* or somebody in authority, or the *Americano,* but *"no sa-a-abe"* was the only verbal response. He pointed to the cans and boxes, and with alacrity the gang responded. In a jiffy they had them ashore, and in another were lugging them off into the darkness, not all in the same direction, and nothing but prompt measures, sharp words and a show of the Colt brought them back, and none too soon, for hubbub arose in the little barrio. Dim lights had flickered a moment, and now were dancing about. Ray

heard excited voices, then hurrying feet, then his own name called in thrilling tones. "Mr. Ray! Mr. Ray!" and he sprang up the sandy shore to meet her, as she came—flying.

"He *isn't* here!" she cried, almost throwing herself into his arms, to the effacement of the ready revolver. "It's another boat they want me to take with—with —I will *not* go with him! she passionately cried. "It is only a mile back here in the river. I have been there with father. Will you—will you——"

"Of course I will!" was the instant answer. "Get those things aboard again, you sprats!" he shouted. "How do we go, Miss Dean?"

"Let them shove the boat through. It's the channel! It deepens at once. Tell them, Paloma. Tell them, Anita!"

Indeed the two girls *were* telling, and the "sprats" obeying. In five minutes they were afloat in the lagoon, steering by the starlight. The native pilot had vanished, but Ray had seized the crew and impressed a brace of boys—the sheen of silver dollars did that. In ten minutes they were well away from the jabbering village, and Ray was fuming with impatience to learn what manner of man was this who had shocked her, but she cowered in Paloma's arms, even when pointing the way. Fifteen minutes' twist and turn through fringing bamboo brought them to a broader channel, with dim lights glowing on the shore, and thither they turned their prow, there again

they were aided to disembark. Then he heard her voice in low cry, half glad, half sobbing, of "Father! —dear father!" and then, all on a sudden his heels were jerked from under him, the back of his head and a block or bat of hard wood met with a crash that filled his vision with dancing sparks—then came blackness and oblivion.

CHAPTER XXI.

When Sandy Ray began to recover consciousness he was at a loss to account for his whereabouts—or anything. He was again in a boat of some kind and going somewhere. He was lying in the shade of some kind of awning, with his bruised and aching head on some kind of pillow, and somebody at intervals was dipping some kind of soft fabric in the water that rippled alongside, then wringing it out and bathing his burning forehead. They were not at sea, for the motion was so gently gliding that he could hardly have told there was motion at all but for the shadows that flitted across the bare mast before his half-opened eyes, but for the rythmic sound of the paddles. It must be hours since last he stood upon his feet, for then it was early evening; now it was broad daylight, and the sun was higher than the high trees that fringed the stream and peeped occasionally over the low gunwale at his prostrate form. He was in much pain and more bewilderment, too weak to lift his head, but presently he began to use his eyes. The first thing ascertained was that he had changed boats. This one was squatter, lower, lighter built, and had no bamboo outrigger. The next thing was that the

skipper, too, was changed. The silent native in the stern sheets was a stranger, and the low voices that once in a while drifted back to him from unseen fellow creatures forward, were also strange, but the hand that bathed his face was kind and friendly and gentle, and then he suddenly wondered if it could be—but, no! He caught a glimpse of it presently, and though slight and dainty in shape, it was very dark, and there was a silver ring on one of the slender fingers. What could it all mean? Another boat must be paddling with them, perhaps more than one, for from time to time there was a hail and an exchange of question and answer, someone toward the bow being the spokesman for their craft. He was conscious of a burning thirst, and feebly lifting a hand he murmured "Water," which brought no response. He then tried "agua" with better result. The slender brown hand held to his lips a native canteen, a section of bamboo nearly two feet in length and three inches in diameter, and the water, though by no means cool, was refreshing. Then the dusky hands gently lifted his head and rearranged the pillow and wet the bandages, and before lowering the heavy head, gave him more water in a little gourd, something flavored with the juice of the lime and that had a slightly bitter and saline taste. He neither knew nor cared what it was. It had a soothing effect. He lay there drowsing and indifferent. He had no idea where they were taking him, or why. Vaguely he

began to realize that he was being lifted ashore and borne within some shaded enclosure. Vaguely he heard the low hum of voices—some native, some American, one pleading, piteous, almost imploring—that he strove vainly to hear distinctly, to understand, to answer, but effort was vain. Under the influence of some powerful narcotic he lay as helpless and inert as was Brewster of No. 6 that eventful night at Boutelle. Where on earth could Boutelle be now? Where on earth, if on earth and not floating on ether, could *he* be now? That voice was Gertrude Dean's, and she was in distress, and that other voice, good heaven, whose was that? Where had he heard it? No, it was all useless wondering. It was just—bliss to forget everything, to go drifting away into space and cloudland and dreamland. He had no longer foothold, thought, care, duty upon earth. He was floating gently into realms of peace and rest ineffable. Even the sound of excitement, of haste, of struggle, of a woman's anguish, fell on deafened ears. Of all that happened for hours that afternoon Sandy Ray was long innocent and ignorant, even though his dimmed and vagrant eyes were rarely closed.

Then came semi-consciousness again, for all was dark and silent and stealthy, and some one was half lifting, half dragging him, on matting perhaps, and dim forms hovered about him, and he mumbled inarticulate protest, and a soft hand—such a cold little hand—was laid firmly upon his mouth. Then he was

lifted bodily and again sprawled helpless in a boat, and his head was pillowed on something that was not zacate grass, and the little hand was withdrawn, and he was allowed to mumble if he so desired, for again they were afloat and paddling away—somewhere.

Finally, dawn again, and then sunrise, for he could see the gilded treetops and hear the clamor of tropic birds and the busy hum of forest insects, yet where he lay all was semi-darkness. His pillow had been changed. He still stretched, full length, in the bottom of a native boat, but she lay moored in some little nook, surrounded by dense foliage. She was afloat and swinging at times from side to side under the influence of a fairly rapid current, and he could hear the plash and murmur of running waters over a stony bed. He wondered why the overhanging branches seemed so dim and nebulous, and his searching hand came in contact with a film of mosquito netting that shielded him from the attacks of countless winged creatures, droning and humming about his floating prison. Who were his jailors, and what could be their purpose? He was still dreamy and inert, yet the mind was again asserting itself and questioning. One thing was reassuring. Whoever were his captors there was kindness among them, else there would have been no netting.

Another hour, and then he began to hear at last from these captors. Low, soft, cautious voices sounded close at hand, then a little head, silhouetted

against the blaze of light far aloft, bent over the mosquito bar, and he blinked his eyes in vain effort to distinguish the features. Then it bent lower still, so close to the gossamer screen that he could no longer doubt his senses. Dark as it had looked against the radiance aloft, that was no dusky face that lowered so near his own. Pallid, drawn and clouded with anxiety and distress of mind, it was still sweet, gentle and unmistakable, and his lips, in his stupor and amazement, now murmured for the first time her name, whereat the fair face was suddenly withdrawn, but a long, white hand came speedily to raise the filmy barrier, and he heard her voice, low and cautious and filled with warning:

"Don't stir yet. Try to keep quiet and patient. Our—everything depends upon it."

There were voices at the stream bank. It sounded as though several women were chattering at once. Then these voices began to float away and diminish in the distance. Evidently there had been another banca and another boatload, mostly feminine unless his ears deceived him. Were there women on the warpath? Were the days of the Amazons returning? He had recognized the voice of Paloma, but the others he knew not at all. Presently for several minutes all was silence again. Then once more the face of Gertrude Dean appeared to him. There was an eager, intense look in her tired eyes. Without a word to him, she was studying the situation, weighing the

chances. Then suddenly the little face vanished a second time. There was murmured confidence between her and some other unseen friend, and presently the netting was drawn aside. A brown hand and sinewy, brown arm aided him to a sitting posture, and then Gertrude came and stood before him.

"There's only one man with us now, Mr. Ray, but —could you walk just a few yards with his help, and —ours?

Between them they lifted him and, supported by them, he stepped ashore and looked slowly, wonderingly, about him. Through openings among the trees he saw the broad, placid bosom of the stream, shallow, perhaps, yet navigable for banca and light canoe. Close at hand the little brook came babbling down from the southward heights and making a tiny harbor, just big enough to float their transport behind its leafy screen, and there to hide it from all eyes along the river. Within a few paces of the brook, in the heart of a little thicket, busy hands had laced and entwined the branches and built a little shelter toward which his gentle guides were leading him. Paloma, gathering armfuls of zacate from the boat, was spreading it upon the ground and giving imperious orders to the meek Tagalog boatman, as she hurried to and fro. Presently, too, as they seated Ray at the foot of a tree, she fetched a tin pail of water from the boat, and with deft hands undid and carefully removed the bandages, while her young

mistress, pale and silent, busied herself in preparing fresh ones. Even then Ray wondered whence came that soft, white fabric, for his "First aid for the wounded" packet was with his saddle bags. However, he asked no questions, and probably would have been accorded scant reply. A little later, soothed, bathed, refreshed, but still weak, he stretched at full length upon a softer couch than the unyielding bottom of the banca, and was presently able to sip some lime juice and water, and nibble, like a schoolboy, at bread and jam. Aunt Nannie's store of provision, sent for the ailing father, had been miscellaneous as the Moons' Hibernian heads could make it, but nothing had come amiss. There was evidently quite a little stock of bags, boxes and cans in the banca, and Paloma was busying herself unloading these, while the young officer ate sparingly, but sipped eagerly at the acid water, and wondered when his fair guardian would again visit him, and explain. She was nowhere within view, and at last he begged Paloma, who was flitting about her patient and seemed again contemplating sending him to sleep, to call the señorita. Paloma feigned deafness, but Gertrude heard and came.

"Please tell me where we are, and what has happened, and what it all means," he said.

"Not yet," she answered, slowly. "In fact, I cannot explain things myself, only, father knew you were in desperate danger and he was grateful to you

and he had you brought here where we can hide you until help can come from Camp Boutelle."

"But—he was so ill—and needed you, and you are here," persisted Sandy. "Where is he?"

"Safe, gone. Sea air will do for him more than I could." There was a touch of bitterness in her tone, "and he is miles away—by this time."

"And left—you?"

"I could not go. I must return to mother as soon—as soon as your friends can come to you."

"But—why didn't you—return from there, wherever we were, last night—or whenever it was?"

She had her answer ready. "They needed the banca for him. We could not have gone in this, even had there been no trouble with the natives. There was the Presidente at Bató and another from Sulpicio. They made insolent demands that father would not meet, even if he could have done so, and there was a quarrel—and some were hurt. They were beaten off at the time, after you were attacked, but they rallied their people and we had to get away quickly. Then father was hurried off to the sea to meet a boat that—that he knew of, and we were paddled up here to keep in hiding until Colonel Blake can send the soldiers. The danger is that the ladrones who attacked Lieutenant Blunt's company are now with the Presidente's friends, and they are furious at father's escape, and they are—looking high and low for us."

"Who got word to the colonel—and how?" asked Sandy, a queer train of thought running through his troubled head.

"*They* would send word—father's friends—from the steamer to shore. The Maumee had sailed. She knew nothing of your going to Bató. Father tried to signal to her from the cliff, back of the village, but the Presidente stopped him."

"If they could send word ashore—they could send you—and that was the quickest way back to your mother," he persisted again. But again she parried.

"The banca was overcrowded as it was. They had to leave two men—he—he had promised should go—and things that were needed."

It was a case of "when rogues fall out," mused Sandy, but there was still more he wished to know. Why should the Presidente's people have attacked him, or, having attacked, why had they not finished him? Then, as one waking from a dream, he was beginning to recall her words, her agitation at Bató; after they had heard that American hail, after she had found that her father was not at the village, but in hiding somewhere up the river.

"You had found your father before I was assaulted," said he. "I heard you speaking to him. It was the last thing I did hear. Why didn't they kill me then? I can't understand this at all. And then —you came running back while there at Bató, saying

that you would not go with somebody or other. Who was that?"

And now the red was mantling the cheek that a moment earlier was so pale and wan, but she looked him fairly in the face and answered. "A man I knew to be father's enemy, and believed to have been Harry's. You were attacked because they thought you—our friend."

And all this time she had remained standing. Tall and slender, even stately she seemed to him, lying languidly there on his pallet of zacate, and now she deemed that quite enough had been said to explain the situation, and that further questioning would be an impropriety, even an indignity. "That is the end of the lesson, Mr. Ray," said she. "You can ponder yourself to sleep over those facts, for I want you to be looking better when your friends come. We may have to put you on guard."

With that she turned and left him, nor would she answer his complaining call. Paloma came, but he did not need Paloma, who, notwithstanding, crouched beside him, removed, moistened and replaced his bandages, then bade him be still and sleep. So finding both mistress and maid implacable, he drowsily composed himself to obey.

It was nearly nightfall when he woke again. All was deep gloom about the refuge. All was silent. He was thirsty, and there swung the bamboo canteen just within easy reach. He was getting hungry

again, and there stood a close-covered tin box, which, being opened, was found to contain more bread and sardines, with slices of lime instead of lemon, and more jam and a stick or two of nutritious chocolate. In silence and reflection he ate and drank, then called Paloma, and no Paloma answered, but again came Gertrude. How weary she looked!

"Paloma has gone a little distance—to a bluff from which the towers at Sulpicio can been seen. She was to return at sunset. Can I do—anything?"

"The bandage feels hot and heavy," said he, "though—perhaps I——"

But she quietly knelt. He bowed his head at her behest, and her slender fingers were presently at work among the folds. Then as quietly she plied the dripping sponge a moment and thus was she busily occupied when, in the gathering dusk, Paloma appeared at the entrance. A quick glance of interrogation shot from Gertrude's eyes. For all answer Paloma silently shook her head, then turned, pointed to the skiff that had borne them to their refuge and said a few words in the Tagalog tongue. Gertrude's face grew, if anything, whiter, certainly graver, but instantly she shook her head. "No, indeed no!" he heard her answer.

When next Sandy Ray would have sought the services of Paloma, and late at evening, thrusting aside his newly suspended mosquito bar, he would have called her to moisten that muffling band, a dim light

as of a glow worm, showed through the foliage. Gertrude, with a little hurricane lamp in hand, again appeared. This time he slowly found his feet and, steadying himself as best he could, made his way to her side. "I'm quite able to bathe it myself," said he, "if Paloma's sleeping. Let me have your lamp a minute." Mutely she gave it, but watched him, as feebly, uncertainly, he managed to reach the brookside, Gertrude following in case of need. At the brink he stopped short, swung his lamp toward the shallow pool in which at dusk the skiff tugged idly at its moorings. The berth was vacant now. The skiff was gone. Turning to her for explanation, he saw her actually swaying, grasping a twig for support, and weak though he was, sprang instantly to aid her. Down she sank, burying her face in her hands, and down he dropped beside her, his own cares forgotten instantly at sight of her dismay.

"What is it? Don't worry so, Miss Dean," he cried.

But the answer appalled him:

"They're all gone!" she moaned. "The boat—the boatman—and Paloma—all!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Dawn had come again, and sunrise, and broad daylight among the treetops, though all below them seemed wrapped in shade—all but the birds seemed wrapped in slumber. Close to the edge of the river, in bedraggled, even blood-stained khaki, with matted hair and haggard eyes, a young soldier crouched in the brake and with keen and eager glance studied the distant reach of the sluggish stream. For hours he had held to his post, weakened by loss of blood, by pain, fever and exposure, and pondering gloomily, as well he might, over the probable issue of this strange and hapless adventure. Twice during the long, perilous night stray parties of natives—whether ladrones, insurrectos or friends he knew not and dare not inquire—had passed within pistol shot of his lair, but he had no pistol. That had been wrenched from his holster during the sudden fracas in the dusk at Bató. Once, somewhere about midnight, the sound of voices, of eager words in the Tagalog tongue, had brought him hurrying from the river brink at the north to the edge of the narrow, brook-fed basin that lay to the southwestward of the little shelter in the thicket that had now become

almost a sacred charge. Obviously there was a trail through the bamboo, leading from the mountains to the sea, and this was probably some party hurrying to the support of their fellows, and hoping for a share in the anticipated spoil. Ray could hear them splashing through the brook perhaps fifty yards up stream, then speeding away with almost noiseless tread, their voices dying gradually in the distance. Breathing free again, he crept back to the more dreaded highway, the river, stopping just one moment, bending low and listening at the entrance to the little rustic refuge that had been his, then tiptoeing away until again he knelt at his station. He had slept hours the previous day, a deep, dreamless and probably a drug-aided sleep, but now, despite weakness and languor, his senses were keenly alert. Not a vestige of fire or smoke could be seen about the lair. He had long since doused the feeble glim of the lamp. Not a precaution had he neglected since he had no longer firearms with which to defend. It was not his own life now that he had such need to guard. There beneath those sheltering boughs, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, lay a girl who had periled everything to rescue him from the toils by which he had been surrounded. Of that fact he had no longer doubt.

The sudden, the overwhelming discovery that they were deserted, possibly betrayed, by Paloma and her dusky lover, the boatman, had proved too much for

Gertrude's remaining strength and nerve. She could have staked her life on that girl's fidelity. She had lavished love and kindnesses innumerable upon her, and had believed that she had abundant and innumerable proofs of Paloma's responsive devotion—some indeed that she dare not let him know. She had found the girl resourceful, helpful, daring, throughout all this strange and perilous week, and finally, when she could not feel sure that her father's shady associates would send word of their plight to Colonel Blake, and when, toward sunset, she learned from Paloma that there were no signs of coming relief, moreover, that they must now be full thirty miles by road and twisting trail, and more than that by sea, lagoon and river from Camp Boutelle, she listened eagerly to Paloma's offer, yet had promptly and positively refused.

The girl had begged of her young mistress permission to take the boat and the boatman, and go by night back along their perilous and hampered route. Paloma declared she could find means to slip by all scouts and stations, and so to reach the garrison at Boutelle. Gertrude had forbidden the desperate attempt, and the native girl, who had never dared disobey her faintest wish or mandate, had turned traitress at the last. "It was Pedro's doing," sobbed Gertrude, in despair. He was faint-hearted. He dreaded the vengeance of his fellows. He had been pleading with Paloma hour after hour. Gertrude had

seen and heard it. Paloma had owned to her that Pedro's home was only a day's journey farther southward—that they could reach it by going up stream a dozen miles and then by sheltered trail. Pedro had been imploring, then probably insistent. Malay blood coursed in their veins both hot and treacherous. They were speeding somewhere to safety, leaving these hapless Americanos to their fate.

But even then Ray could not account for her utter hopelessness, she who had been so brave, so daring, first for her father, and then, with that father safe from the clutches of the law and, so long as he behaved himself, from the immediate ravages of disease, then—how could Ray doubt it?—had she not been just as daring for him. The entire story he might never know, but, between her and her Tagalog handmaid, he had been snatched from the midst of foes and spirited away to at least temporary safety, and they, in sharing his flight, had come to share his peril. Small wonder that Pedro had begged his Dulcinea to flee from the wrath to come. It was of course embarrassing, distressing, disquieting that Gertrude should thus be left alone with him in the heart of a Philippine forest, but it was not necessarily dreadful. What with Blake and his little garrison only thirty miles away to the north, and Blunt's original forty somewhere a few miles off to the south, with Prince and his company in march between them, speedy search must be made for the missing officer. Then,

too, though Ray detested Walker and all his works, even such as Walker and his squad were not to be despised as rescuers, if they should have failed to reach Blunt, and be still searching and scouting in this neighborhood. The Dagupan trail could not be very far inland, though it had to keep well back among the heights because of the summer flooding of these lowland streams. To Ray the situation seemed not only hopeful, but intensely interesting. Why, then, should she so utterly collapse?

He had striven to soothe and cheer her, pointing out that there was even less danger of their being discovered, now that the betraying boat was gone. They had provisions enough, such as these dainties were, to last two days, by which time, surely, Blake would have his searching detachments in the field, and the shores of this important stream would as surely be explored. But Gertrude sobbed that these banks were even better known to the ladrones, and the natives generally, than the inland trails. They would certainly be coming in search of them. He had had almost to carry her to the little shelter that had been his, but that now should be, must be, hers. She *must* go, he said, she *must* lie down, rest, sleep, recover strength. But not until he almost sternly commanded would she yield. Then he had gathered up such packages of stores as he could find, stowed them deep in the thicket, obliterated every possible trace of their presence, then he knelt and listened at

the entrance, and, hearing no sound, ventured to peep into the dim interior to satisfy himself that she had obeyed, and was lying beneath the mosquito bar that had been strung for him. Vaguely, mistily he could just discern the slender form, stretched full length, apparently, in a sleep of utter exhaustion. Then, with a murmured prayer, he stole softly away and hied him to the lookout Pedro had scooped among the flotsam and jetsam at the bank.

Not an hour later, as he crouched there watching, the sound of other voices, faint in the distance, came drifting to his ears, and again every sense became instantly alert. Slowly the occasional sounds increased in volume. Natives again, but this time in bancas! Slowly their shadowy transports rounded the forest-bordered bend half a mile up stream. Sandy could tell the moment they straightened out in the starlit mid-channel by the clearer ring of their gutterals.

Nearer they came and nearer, as yet unseen in the deep shadows. Evidently they feared neither foe nor interruption, for the chatter was unrestrained, yet not boisterous. Nor was there excitement in tone or manner, nor anything to indicate that they sought either to conceal their own movements or discover those of others. They were neither hunting nor hunted. So, before they were within hailing distance, Sandy slipped away from his post and around to the entrance of the little bower where slept the lady

this young knight must guard from every ill. If restless or sleeping lightly, she might suddenly awake at sound of voices, and, thinking instantly of Paloma, call rejoicingly aloud. His caution was not unwarranted. Just opposite their refuge the voices, that for a moment had been stilled, broke out afresh. A call from one canoe to another rang out across the unruffled waters, and instantly Ray heard start and stir within. The girl had roused suddenly from her sleep, and the next moment, bending low, she met him almost face to face, only to hear him order, "Hush! Not a sound!" And so with beating hearts they knelt, her little hand within an inch of his, their knees almost touching, and listened until, one after another, three bancas were paddled almost stealthily, noiselessly, by, and then again he begged—he bade her creep back to her rustic pillow. "These at least are not searching for us," he said. "We can rest in peace until the morning."

"Yes, *I* can," she answered, "but you who are ill—and injured." Whereat he laid imperative hand upon her arm. "Creep back and sleep," he insisted. "You shall do guard duty to-morrow."

Twice again during the early morning hours he had stirred about to keep a leg or arm from going to sleep. Twice again he had knelt by the leafy entrance and listened. Once he thought he could faintly hear her breathing, soft, regular and low, and then at last the birds began to twitter and stir in the foliage

aloft, and forest birds seemed so rare in Luzon. A grayish pallor was overspreading the sky and, far down stream, some unseen aquatic fowl began to splash and quack in the silent reaches; a mist rose softly from the sluggish pool, and above it all the dawn came on apace until once more the sunshine burst through the forest fringe of the eastward chain, and tipped with fire the lowland groves, and the crest of the seaward billows. Ray's long night watch came to an end, with his precious charge still safe, still softly sleeping, and then, when he could have begun to feel a little more hope and confidence, there came a sound that brought him quivering to his feet and facing full to the threatening west.

Somewhere over toward the sea, through the thick and tangled shrubbery, two shots were fired in quick succession and went rolling and echoing up the river. Something told him she, too, would have found her feet and, hurrying to the refuge, there he met her, crouching at the entrance, her eyes dilated, her lips apart, her white hands pressed upon her throbbing heart. Thus far their disturbers had come from the hills. Now they were coming from the direction of the sea, from the point whence they, the fugitives, had escaped them. Was it thither Paloma had gone? Was it she who was leading them to the sheltering nook she herself had more than helped to make? Whoever might be leading, these probably were enemies, and were coming fast. Ten minutes more

He could plainly hear their voices, almost their words.

and their voices could be heard, guiding shouts and even commands—signals—interchanged between shore and shallop. They were coming both by land and water.

A moment or two they—the hunted—stood there, the silent soldier and the trembling girl, so close that each could almost feel the beating of the other's heart, but, intently as Ray was listening, he was watching her, and noting that even more intently, and with fearful interest, she was listening, for in her dilating eyes there came a look of infinite horror, of dread unspeakable. The next thing he knew she had clutched his hand. "Oh, come, come away from here," she cried, imploringly. "We *must* go!"

"We *can't* go!" said he. "Listen! They are above us now! Some are already at the crossing of the brook," and again he turned his listening ear that way. Surely he was right! Speeding swiftly along the trail, the foremost natives were already at the point where the hill party had crossed at midnight. He could plainly hear their voices, almost their words, but to these Gertrude would not listen. In some strange, fearful fascination she had no eyes, no ears, for anything but the coming boatloads in the stream. Whoever these advancing through the timber, they had not turned riverward on reaching the brook. They had gone, indeed, beyond, and could be heard calling back to their fellows in the rear, but the girl was crouching now and listening only to the

sounds from below. Ray could distinguish several voices as the bancas came paddling nearer, although as yet no words to him were distinguishable. Suddenly, however, there was a shout in commanding tone, at sound of which Gertrude Dean flung herself at the feet of Sanford Ray, wrenched free her hand, and with convulsive violence clasped his knees. "Have you nothing?" she cried—"not even your knife?"

"My knife, yes! but—against all that gang?" he answered vaguely.

"Oh, can't you—understand?" she moaned. "Mrs. Blake told me—your regiment—never let a woman fall into the hands of the Indians. Isn't this as—as horrible? Oh, you will not! You shall not!"

And then he understood, for she was clutching desperately at the knife at his belt.

"They shan't have you, Gertrude! Quick, dive in there again!" Then voices sounded close at hand. Someone was landing at the very bank, and Ray almost thrust her to the narrow entrance, her hands clinging to his, as he bent low and followed, then drew the leafy branches down about the opening. There like hunted hare they crouched, both her hands now clasping his left arm, her head almost drooping upon his knee, and with hearts wildly throbbing they listened breathless for the next words. There were sounds of crashing through bamboo and brake, of muttered imprecation, of booted feet on dry, snap-

ping twigs—a sound at which Ray started and looked bewildered. Then, hurried stir and search along the little harbor basin, where the banca had floated so securely, and then, in answer to sudden and savage question from the stream bank, the amazing answer:

"Yes, been here and gone! That damned slut by this time has steered them up to Prince's camp."

"C'mawn then, curse you! We've no time to lose!"

A moment later the banca had shoved off and gone. Still another moment and with her fair head pillowed in her arms, her arms on Sandy's knee, Gertrude Dean was pouring out her soul in sobs and thanksgiving, while he in wonderment and amaze, bent speechless over her. That last, beyond all manner of doubt, was the voice of "Hasty" Walker.

CHAPTER XXIII.

And then, in the hour that followed, when she had measurably regained composure, little by little Sandy drew from Gertrude Dean the story of the brief, but never-to-be-forgotten period in which she had known and suffered at the hands of the erstwhile popular and applauded hero of the Forty-Second. Harry, her beloved brother, had been at Manila on business for her father during the short sojourn there of the newly arrived regiment. Harry was an enthusiast from boyhood in baseball and kindred sports. Harry, like almost everybody else, had lost his head in admiration of the brilliant play of the Forty-Second's field captain—had lavished attentions on him while the two were together in the old Spanish city, and enthusiastically welcomed him when the battalion came to Camp Boutelle. Harry was too proud to visit the garrison where his father was ostracised, and therefore begged Walker to come frequently to San Sulpicio, where everything he had would ever be at Walker's disposal, and Walker came and practically helped himself, and at first was more than welcome. He won the father's instant allegiance by professing sympathy with him and enmity to his detractors—

Blake and the officers of the cavalry. He won the mother's interest by precisely the same means. He had won Harry's fealty by his prowess in the ball field, and now, to make a long story short, he won Harry's money, then—heaven, how the poor child sobbed as she told it!—the money that was not Harry's, by his prowess in still other games. But there was one thing he could not win, and that had stood out stanchly against him from the very first—that was Harry's sister's trust. She shrank from him instinctively. She repelled his bold, "Bowery," confident advances, and the more he sought, the more she shrank. A week before the sudden swoop of the ladrones on San Sulpicio and the looting of the customs, she knew that money had been transferred from Harry's safe to Walker's hands, knew that Harry was in that fellow's power, and dare not openly offend him until—until Walker dared to—say something to her—something that no girl—no girl, she said in her innocence, would tolerate for an instant. Then she had blazed out at him, told him he had ruined her brother, but that she scorned and defied him. It seemed to scare him back to his senses for a time. He came and humbly begged her pardon—besought her, for Harry's sake, not to make a scene, not to betray him. He promised restitution to Harry. His own needs were great and imminent and pressing. Creditors had threatened to expose him and his methods. He had had to "borrow," as he called it, this money

from Harry, had had to send most of it to Manila, but if she would overlook his—he called it his "foolishness"—he would have abundant means in a few days and make all right. But then came the attack Then came their flight to Camp Boutelle, Harry's tragic death, her mother's prostration, her father's illness. Then came the admission from her father that experts had already been ordered from Manila to inspect his books, accounts and general conduct. They could open the safe that the ladrones could not make way with, and then Harry's heavy shortage would be discovered, his name disgraced and dishonored for all time. It was to implore Mr. Walker to replace the missing money that she had importuned him while at Colonel Blake's, had followed him to the grove, had even stolen to his quarters in the dusk of evening, not once, but several times, in hope of seeing him; had written him and sent the note by Paloma, and in the midst of it all, her half-crazed father had told her he must get away, that if he remained there he would surely be arrested and thrown in jail. If he could only send two hundred dollars to the Presidente at Sulpicio, a native boat would come for him, take him out to sea by night, set him aboard a steamer whose captain would *have* to give him refuge and get him over to Hong Kong or Shanghai, and still Walker failed her until, in desperation, she told him she would tell the whole story to Mrs. Blake, and if need be to Captain Crabtree,

and then he had given her, he said, all he had, and Paloma had given her, she declared, all her "savings," and this Paloma had sent by Hilario to the Presidente, and brought back word that the boat and crew would be ready. Then she had planned her father's escape, Paloma aiding wonderfully (poor girl, even then she dare not tell him how wonderfully, though, the two sentries, one "doped," the other bribed, might have confessed), and Sandy began to realize how, at his expense, Paloma had made sure of some of her "savings," and how, at the sentry's expense, Dean had made his escape. Gertrude had gone in relief and joy to tell her mother to rest in peace, that that very night the Formosa would be spiriting the husband and father away to safety and Shanghai, for it was part of Dean's plan to have the captain place him on the first China-bound steamer they should see. And then had come the appalling news that, after all, there must have been some treachery—that her father had not succeeded in reaching the steamer. Then came the tidings of his desperate illness down the coast below Sulpicio, and her summons to his side, and Ray knew most of the rest, she said, and shrank from telling it.

But Ray had heard enough to make him wish to hear all, and gently he persisted and questioned. He believed he knew now who had been ransacking his desk. He felt sure he knew now who had made way with the mess money, and other missing funds, while

Aunt Nannie's "rainy day" savings were as easily accounted for. He had disliked the man Walker from the start, and now, *now* his soul was up in arms to meet him on fair field, and tell him what manner of scoundrel he thought him, and then to have it out with him, old army fashion, with fire-spitting Colt or flashing blade. He was beginning, too, to see through the cause of her intense agitation when she came running back to the boat after their first landing, and her unsuccessful quest for her father. He desired to know—he needed—he *craved* to know—whether Walker was there, renegade and deserter, consorting with brown robbers and white smugglers, and firmly at last he demanded answer. With bowed head and shamed, flushed cheeks, she owned that he was there, that he had had much—most—to do with luring her thither, that he had met her, had striven to place her in his own banca, with the promise to take her at once to her father's side—her father who was indeed not far distant, but in no such bodily ill as had been told her. Paloma had found that out for her already. Paloma, through her native lover, had ascertained just where Dean was in hiding, and thither had been their pilot; but Walker's fellows were there, too, first, and had dealt the blow that had felled her young knight and escort, and then—she would not tell the rest—how her father was even then spirited away to sea, leaving her to be dealt with as Walker had planned, had not Paloma's vigilance

and energy again enabled her to escape and to bring Ray with them. How could she now believe that Paloma had willingly deserted her? There was only one way to account for it. Some of her tribesmen were of the ladrone gang, and they had threatened her life and that of her lover. She had fled, over persuaded, perhaps, and in dread of their vengeance.

All this in the course of the morning hours—after he had provided her with food, and some chocolate heated over a tiny fire—Ray succeeded in winning from her faltering lips. All this from the girl whom he had suspected of thieving, and believed to be that blackguard Walker's willing victim. All this from the girl whose brains and bravery had rescued him from the hands of a gang of miscreants, who might either hold him for ransom or heave his battered body, stone-weighted, into the depths of the lagoon. All this from a girl whose devotion to her old reprobate of a father, to her broken-spirited mother, to the memory of that beloved, betrayed and murdered brother, should have commanded his uttermost respect and homage. All this from the girl who crouched there under the spreading branches of the tropic forest, sometimes with tears welling from her beautiful eyes, sometimes with flushes burning on her soft, wan cheek, and Sandy Ray, in self-reproach and humiliation unspeakable, knelt beside her, ready almost to worship, yet not daring to confess his guilt, for guilt he now regarded it.

He had set forth on this expedition of possible peril because Aunt Nannie would so have it, as the escort and protector of a girl whose honor he doubted and whose honesty he denied, and within the compass of a second noontide had seen his doubts and denials, one after another, set to shame and confusion, and himself to remorse unspeakable. She was all that Aunt Nannie had said of her, and more. She was nothing he had dared to say to his sacred self. She was, more than any girl he had ever met, or known, or heard of, brave, beautiful, dutiful and devoted—a daughter who served and honored as her God had commanded, even where she could not respect—a sister who had loved and well nigh sacrificed her good name in the effort to protect—a woman ennobled by sorrow, suffering and peril. Oh, what was he that he dared to doubt her? Who was he that he had presumed to question? In utter humility he could have bowed his head to the dust and kissed the worn shoe that so scantily covered her slender foot. But he dare not touch hand or lip even to the sole of that foot, the hem of that still wet and bedraggled garment. He prayed heaven she might never dream how he had wronged her, and now, if he could but die in her defense, it would be just reparation. As has been said, Sandy was still something of a boy.

And even as they hovered there, deep in the thicket and at the foot of the far-spreading trees, there came again sudden sound that set his nerves a-tingle and

sent her, at his instant order, creeping on hands and knees beneath the canopy of her little rustic castle. Voices, excited voices, stealthy and half suppressed, were again audible up stream; then straining paddle, the rush of waters cleft by sharp and speeding prow; then answering calls from shore. Not one, but several bancas were speeding down the shadowy flood. Not one, but several parties, apparently, were scurrying down the parallel tracks, for across the stream hail answered hail, and some were cries of warning. Gertrude, listening with dilated eyes, sat quivering with excitement, one hand outstretched toward Ray, who knelt at the entrance, one finger pressed upon her lips.

"They are saying 'soldiers'!" she murmured, almost breathless. "Soldiers *both* ways!"

"Hurrah!" was the joyful answer, muttered low. "I *knew* the colonel would be sending, and I s'pose Prince, up river somewhere, has got word."

Again the signals from shore to shore, and voices from the bancas, Tagalog and Ilocano both, and sounds of scurry through the brake and bamboo, of splashing through the brook above them, of swift plying paddles along the broad bosom of the stream. Two, three bancas darted by and went unswerving on toward the wooded point below. Then rallying cries as though the warriors by land were halted for counsel or defense, and summoning their fellows of the flotilla. Sandy judged that they must be landing and

gathering some four hundred yards down stream, and others still, laggards, stragglers, or possibly rear guard, were coming from the southeast—coming from the direction of the hills and the Dagupan trail, and Paloma's lover's village—the direction of the scene of Blunt's sharp encounter of the week gone by—the direction in which by this time Prince should be, and Walker should have gone. Not only by trail were these unseen stragglers coming, but by stream; for again voices—voices raised in excitement—could be heard rounding that upper point—voices that presently became articulate and familiar, for now, too, Sandy was quivering from head to foot; for now, too, Sandy could understand. There was no mistaking the vernacular, as with powerful sweep of paddles the coming craft shot along under the overhanging branches, nearer and nearer with every second.

"Land right in there where we hunted last night—this morning. It's the best——"

"Land nothing, by God! We land where the others are—where we can stand off those sons of skunks from Boutelle, that damned cockney with 'em!"

"Not for *me* you don't! Catch me running my neck into a noose like that. You land here where I say. I've got to hunt a hole, I tell you!" And Ray's heart nearly burst from his breast as he heard Walker's craven words. No wonder he dare not be seen of his former fellows!

"Your neck's in a noose anyhow you fix it, you

whelp!" was the furious answer. "And a hell of a fix you've got us into in your fool hunt for a girl. Here's Prince, not three miles behind us, coming for all he's worth, and your cockney friend shoving up from the sea, and nothing but tangle on both sides of us——"

"Shut up! Listen!" came Walker's voice again. No need to listen. Far away down the twisting river, sharp, clear, ringing, came the crackle and crash of musketry, the snappy bark of the "Krag," the music that told to eager and rejoicing ears, to guilty and tottering senses, that the soldier had not been slow to come in search for the missing comrade—that the "blue-shirt boys" from camp had spurned the intervening score of miles, rafted the lagoon and, plunging into the canebrake, following some unerring guide, had struck the outpost of the lurking enemy and, in spite of him, were crashing on to the rescue.

CHAPTER XXIV.

For a moment the two crouched there, the girl trembling with excitement, the young soldier speedily gaining control over his nerves, both listening eagerly, intently. A sputtering fire of Mauser and Remington had opposed for a moment the sharp crackle of "Krags." Then could be heard the deep-lunged, exultant cheer of the men of the Forty-Second, rejoicing in their first clash with the bandit gang, and rushing impetuously on in pursuit of the thin veil of skirmishers, thrown out apparently to check the onset long enough to enable the main body to deploy through the underbrush, and find shelter among the trees. Then it would seem as though the attacking line had found the brake too dense a tangle, for the bugle sounded halt, answered by mocking and derisive yells and loud peals on the Spanish made clarions of the ladrones. But the halt was meant only for those men who, following pathways or openings, had got far in advance of their comrades. Any level-headed commander knew what that might result in when they struck the fighting line. Then the spirited fusillade broke out afresh and, straining his ears,

Ray could tell that the crew of the landed banca, the two white men among their passengers, and some dark-skinned native official were having a vehement discussion—Walker's unknown associate vociferating in Spanish and this personage gabbling alternately in Tagalog to his followers and in "pidgin" English to the whites. Walker, too, was exploding vocally, upbraiding and damning in equal parts, but for a moment Ray could not tell what the clatter was about. Then came sudden explanation. Like the crack of a whip "spat" went a steel-jacketed shot through the roof of their shelter, barely a foot above Gertrude's bared and bonny head. Another instant, and Ray had sprung to her side, interposing between her and the mile distant firing line, and with hands that trembled at their very task, yet would brook no denial, he seized her by the shoulders and bore her backward to her pillow. "Lie close," he murmured, "and don't move."

"Bullet?" she asked, gazing fearfully upward, as a leaf came fluttering down.

"Bullet," he answered, calmly stretching himself beside her, leaning his head on his left hand, yet anxiously, protectingly striving to spread himself like mother hen. "Those Krags shoot out of sight. We've got to hug the ground till it's over."

"And that's what they are squabbling about," said she. "One bullet has struck their boat. The crew want to run, and can't be made to understand they'll

run right into other soldiers coming down the river. You—*you* must lie down, Mr. Ray."

But the sudden spatter of half a dozen shots in the thick bamboo about them, the almost simultaneous crash of a distant volley, followed by a rousing cheer, stilled her voice and settled the question under discussion at the bank. They could hear excited jabbering, curses, imprecations, the plash of paddles and then, hard breathing, two men, unseen but swearing, threw themselves upon the ground just beyond the back of the shelter and presumably behind covering trees. Ray signalled hush. She looked bravely up into his face, assenting, then suddenly, in turn, put both her hands upon his shoulder and with determination bore down upon it, forcing him to earth and close beside her. He longed to seize that hand and cover it with kisses. He could only thank her with a smile, for there came sudden change of tune at the fighting front. All in a moment the sullen silence of the defense was broken. In a spirited, trilling call, unlike any known to our service, the Filipino bugle rang out upon the sultry air and at the last note a crashing volley, treble in volume to that of the Yankee advance, rolled out through the dense timber, followed by a chorus of yells of defiance and the fierce sputter of swift and deadly fire at close range. Whatever their temporary success there could be no question what that meant to the would-be rescuers, to the gallant onset of the American line. It had stumbled,

or been led, into a fatal trap. It was encompassed now in front and flank by a concentric fire from thrice its number of unseen foes. "My God!" cried Ray, between his clinching teeth. "I've been dreading just that! Those fellows have had no Indian campaigning or they'd never have got into such a box."

But the sound of changeful battle that brought dread and dismay to these two young refugees, had far different effect beyond the leafy screen that hid them from the lurking pair of renegades. To the unspeakable wrath of Sandy Ray, as the exultant cheering gave place to silence, broken only by the occasional yell of some half savage native and the fierce sputter of rifle shots—a silence that told unerringly that now the Americans were fighting grimly, desperately over their dead and wounded—the voices of Walker and his comrade in crime were uplifted in excited, exultant comment.

"By God, I believe they've got old Crab in a pocket!" shouted the well-known and destested voice. "Right you are!" went up the responsive shout. "I thought sure he'd burst through and be up here in ten minutes, but Tonio's holding 'em if he isn't cleaning 'em out."

"Curse those cowardly brutes in the banca!" This again from Walker. "Most of the Mauser cartridges are there, and at this rate Tonio may need them."

"Then I've *got* to call them back," was the answer.

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But Gertrude Dean res
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have nothing!" Then as his strength prevailed against her gentler hold, and he seemed escaping her, she threw herself upon him, her right arm encircling his neck, her soft cheek, pallid with dread and distress, almost bent to his brow, his curly head for a moment, at least, pressed to her heaving bosom. And still he would have burst his sweet fetters, but her every sense was on the alert. "Stop! Listen!" she panted. "They're coming!" And coming they were, two or three light and eager forms, slipping like serpents through the intricacies of the thicket, their bared feet making scarce a sound upon the sandy ground, their excited voices alone betraying them. Crouching again, rooted to the spot, her arm still about his neck, her heart still bounding close to his ears, the two held their breath and listened. They heard the runners plunge into the pool and scramble dripping up the bank; heard them rush, unheeding, past the entrance to their little bower; heard them now forcing a way through the thicket to the river and then, almost stumbling over Walker as he heaved himself up from behind a sheltering tree. Then Ray felt her fingers on his lips, compelling him to utter silence, that she might listen to what took place. He could catch but few words, so hard were they breathing from their rapid run, but she, better schooled in the dialect, knew their wants at once, and exultingly translated: "Ammunition. They are nearly out! Must have more at once," she whispered, eagerly.

"Banca vamoosed," was all Walker could sputter for reply. *"Todos cobardes!—vamoosed! mas arriba!"* and his mongrel Spanish and wild gesticulation told their story. Two of the searchers went bounding away on the trail of the unknown American, already half-sent on the same errand. The third threw himself with a moan of misery upon the ground. "Shot?" they heard Walker query. "Yes! *Si.*" "Where? Show me," and they could tell that he was bending over the stricken man. Ray had ceased to struggle, but was so intent on what was taking place without, and she so fearful that her captive might resume the effort, that Gertrude's arm still clasped about his neck—was still clinging in its unconscious embrace, when on a sudden again, both young heads were uplifted, and with ears attent and with eyes dilated, they listened eagerly to a new sound, audible even among the crash of musketry below them; then turned and gazed in triumph and rejoicing into each other's face. Somewhere up stream, still distant but still sure, a sharp swift crackle told that the coming force had sighted foemen on the river, or lurking along the shores, and the slender, steel-clad messengers of death were lightning leaping from the brown tubes in chase of them.

And Walker, too, had heard, and was quick to realize its meaning: Prince coming from the mountains; Crab coming from the sea, and he, a deserter, a renegade, a thief, was caught between them like a rat in a

trap, escape by land impracticable, by river impossible!

And Crabtree's fellows, some at least, some fellows at flank or rear, and undeafened by the frequent shots about them, had also heard, and called attention to it, for presently "Cease firing!" trilled on the breeze, and though for the moment the encircling foemen in the bamboo redoubled their own volleying, that in itself gave confirmation to the story and did not utterly drown the more distant but most significant signal of comrades' coming, for within a moment, up to the skies went a ringing cheer of rejoicing and defiance, that Sandy Ray almost burst his thrilling bonds in mad longing to answer. Then again the Krags took up the burden of their battle song and two young hearts, throbbing responsive in the security of their leafy fastness, found time in the midst of all this renewal of hope and courage, to return part way to the conventionalities of their caste, and Gertrude's arm slowly released its hold, yet—sent not forth its captive.

And now the native force, down stream, began losing faith. Many, with their ammunition gone, were drifting back toward the river in search of means of crossing. Two of the bancas, that had gone seaward in the early morning, could be heard paddling, uneasily and hard, seeking some intermediate point of refuge up the river. "Pray heaven they don't try this!" thought Ray, as he glanced at Gertrude's face,

again paling with dread. From Walker they heard no more at the moment, nor from the wounded native. The latter had begged for water and Walker seemed to have crept over to the bank in quest of it. They could hear the voices of men along the shore, shouting to their fellows in the boats, and the latter answering. "The bancas are crowded," whispered Gertrude. "They are trying to make for a landing on the other side, a little further up. They say there's a trail through the swamp over there. Some of them will have to swim." They could hear occasional shots to the southeast, still over a mile away, but it was evident that Prince had found the trails on the left bank and was shoving ahead, driving his opponents before him. Half an hour would bring his foremost men abreast of them and then, then the strain, the concealment would be ended. They could hear more of the natives, breaking away from in front of Crabtree's men, flitting through the bamboo below, and, both above and below, flocking out along the bank and imploring the boatmen to aid. It could not be long before Crab's fellows, too, would be coming on again, said Ray, looking into her lovely face, then down at the slender, white hand, with its twitching fingers clasping and unclasping so emptily in her lap. He longed to seize it once again and hold it tight. It seemed so to need it. Then came more shouting, more imploring prayers, said Gertrude, for the bancas, unheeding, were even now paddling

"Walker, you blackguard, you villain!"—*Page 291.*

under the trees directly opposite, and some poor wretches who dare no longer face the coming fire, seemed taking to the water in hopes of swimming across. And then at last from below went up a mighty shout, and "Forward!" pealed from the bugle, and with a rush that could be heard a mile away, what was left of Crabtree's fighting line came forging through the brake, with the last of its opposers brushing away like flies before it.

Again would Ray have scrambled to the light, in all his eagerness to greet the coming array, but again she seized and clung to him. "It's madness!" she cried. "You will simply be shot down and butchered by these ladrones. Can't you *hear* them?"

Indeed he could, on every side, scrambling like mad for shelter, shouting to the vanishing bancas, screeching warning to one another, and, in the midst of it all, came strange, sudden, startling interruption! All in an instant heavy booted footfalls crashed through the thicket to their left, and a second later, with the lunge of a hunted beast a dark form dove into the narrow aperture, the head and shoulders of a man came scraping through, and a burly form hurdled into their midst. Before the intruder could realize where he was—before he could fairly see, Ray, with a low cry, had flung himself upon him, his knife at the brawny throat.

"Walker, you blackguard! you villain! You're my prisoner!"

Of the minute that followed Gertrude Dean could never thereafter give clear account—a moment of furious struggling, of fierce imprecation, of gasping, rending, straining melée in which the little shelter was torn asunder and she was trampled under foot, and two agile forms, one slender, sinewy and lithe, the other massive, muscular and all powerful, flung reeling out into the open, locked in each other's grasp. And then one brutal arm swung free, and a heavy revolver butt came crashing down—again, again—and blood was spouting from the dark, curly, drooping head as the lighter form went limply to earth, and then her senses fled and left her swooning on the sand.

When she came to, Paloma was sobbing at her side, drenching her face with water. Rough men in drab campaign hats and khaki were crowding about her and other prostrate forms, and Dr. Scammon was kneeling beside a stricken officer who, half supported by a brace of soldiers, pallid, bleeding, sorely wounded, was nevertheless looking up into the face of a panting, blood-covered, burly subaltern and stretching forth a feeble hand as he painfully gasped:

"Mr. Walker, I owe you an amende, sir. I—er—have misjudged you, entirely! Your—er—splendid conduct to-day shall be the subject of the special report, sir, of your—er—your commahnding officer."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE colonel commanding the —d Cavalry and the picturesque military station of Camp Boutelle sat poring over certain official reports, an elongated picture of perplexity. To begin with, and in order of rank of the writers, there was this:

Bivouac Company "A," 42nd U. S. Inf.
Near Balaoag, P. I.
November —, 190—.

Post Adjutant,
Camp Boutelle:—

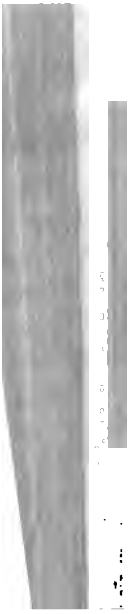
Sir:—In compliance with post order No. 79, dated November —, 190—, and the verbal instructions of the post commander, I proceeded with one subaltern and 46 enlisted men of this company, accompanied by Surgeon Scammon and two hospital corps men, with three days' cooked rations in the haversacks, marching to San Sulpicio between 7 p. m. and midnight of the —th, resting on the beach until 4 a. m., when, after making coffee, the command was embarked in such native boats as I could hire or impress, and setting forth at dawn, we reached the village of Bató, on the lagoon, at 9:30. The inhabitants

denied, as had the Presidente at San Sulpicio, all knowledge of the whereabouts of Mr. Dean, and declared that nothing had been seen of Miss Dean and Lieutenant Ray. While searching the village, however, my men found Lieutenant Ray's campaign hat and his silk handkerchief stiff with blood, and with this evidence before me I felt warranted in taking more strenuous measures toward obtaining the truth. The head men of the village were away, but, confronted by the relics we had found, certain others weakened, admitted that Dean had been detained there a day or two, but had been taken out to sea in a coasting vessel, while his daughter and Lieutenant Ray had "gone up the river." Sergeant Prosser, scouting the east bank, came upon the native girl Paloma, who begged that we should come at speed, Miss Dean and the lieutenant were in hiding at a point some nine miles away and in desperate danger from the Presidente's friends, the ladrones and "other bad men" who were beating the bamboo in search of them. Paloma estimated that as many as three hundred insurrectos or banditti, the same gang probably, that sacked San Sulpicio, were scouring the trails toward the mountains, and her companion, a Tagalog, declared that Captain Prince had already had a brush with them, and was coming down the river in hopes of another.

Ferrying across the lagoon, we started by trail at 11 o'clock, Paloma and Pedro guiding. About 1:30,

when some six miles out and marching by file, as the narrow, crooked trail compelled, we were fired upon from ambush. Sergeant Coon was mortally, and Paloma slightly, wounded, and in the melée that followed two men were hit. Pushing on as best we could, we drove them, these skulkers, before us, receiving occasional shots from them, and at two o'clock were suddenly assailed in front and on both flanks. Sergeant Fisher, Corporal Dixon and three men fell at the first fire, but though taken at disadvantage, the detachment rallied about their commanding officer and fallen comrades, and not only succeeded in holding the enemy at bay in spite of overpowering force, but in so severely punishing him that in course of half an hour his fire slackened to such an extent that I felt justified in ordering a charge, which was executed with great enthusiasm and effect, dislodging the enemy from a strong position and driving them back to a dense thicket of bamboo. Here we caught the sound of distant firing to the southeast which seemed further to affect the enemy, for at three o'clock, in a series of impetuous dashes, we succeeded in flanking the second position, and then, rushing the enemy with hardly a halt until, on the bank of the river, many threw down their arms and surrendered.

Earlier in the affair Lieutenant Meeker had been disabled by a shot through the left foot, and, shortly before reaching the south fork, known as the Balli-



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killed. Lieutenant Meeker, myself, Sergeants Presser and Speed, Corporals Flynn and Gorham and six privates wounded. Dr. Scammon, whose services were invaluable and who looked after our wounded under heavy fire, pronounces the other wounded as in no especial danger.

In closing this report I beg leave most heartily to commend to the notice of the colonel commanding the conduct of Surgeon Scammon, Lieutenant Walker, Sergeant Prosser and Corporal Gorham, who merit every honor in our power to bestow.

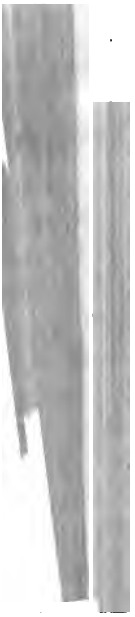
Very respectfully,
A. M. Paget-Crabtree,
Captain 42nd Inf., U. S. A.,
Commanding.

Alas, poor Meeker, shot too early in the fight to win a word of praise! Alas, poor Sandy, stricken down and out too effectually to permit of his uttering a word of protest! Alas, poor deluded Crab—and others!

But here is what Captain Prince had to say. Let us content ourselves with official extract.

. . . . . .

"The trails led seaward, probably to Bató, as Lieutenant Walker's note declared, and though I would not have permitted him to go unguarded on so hazardous a quest, with only a brace of native guides, I was glad to have even the small reinforcement he left me, and could only follow his lead. Toward noon



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No wonder the colonel
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highest terms his bravery, leadership and zeal. The penciled reports from the field (poor Crab had fainted twice before he could sign his) preceded only a day the coming of the wounded and a third of the combined detachment. Prince and Walker remained with the little command on the river, but Crabtree, Ray, Blunt, Meeker and the disabled and wounded men had been paddled round past Sulpicio, and borne through the surf at Boutelle in the arms of the returned cavalrymen. Crab was too weak to stir hand or foot. Ray was raving in brain fever and was carried to the room recently occupied by Mrs. Dean, for Gertrude had stayed at Bató to nurse Paloma, and thither Mrs. Dean had insisted on going in the banca that went with supplies for the wounded. Her child, she said, had need of her and heaven would send her strength.

In vain had Mrs. Blake remonstrated. Both Gertrude and Paloma should be brought to Boutelle, she said, and most tenderly should they be cared for, but Scammon, when he came with his boatload of invalids, said Mrs. Dean had acted for the best. The good padre at Bató had opened his heart and doors to Paloma and her American friends. It was a simple case; they would be better there. Indeed, Mrs. Blake was both pained and surprised that the doctor should speak with such—such lack of feeling—or interest—or *something,* of the gentle girl she had grown to hold so dear—the girl who seemed to her fond and

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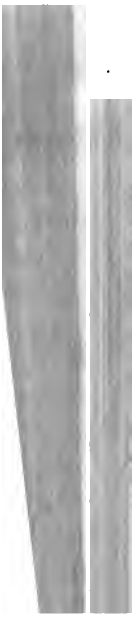
bivvywhacked there for the night, and the lieutenant had been questioning every native we met. He could get something out of 'em, though none of us could speak their lingo. That night he said Lieutenant Blunt's camp couldn't be more'n a dozen miles further, and the niggers told him all ladrones had vamoosed, and sure had gone down the river. There were Americanos at Bató, one of them sick. So that night the lieutenant with two of 'em pushed out in a banca. He said they'd paddle down and find out who the American was, and what was the matter. He knew the country, having been out there shooting from San Sulpicio." Sergeant Butts was to stay there with the party till he came back, but to send two men ahead at daybreak to find Lieutenant Blunt's camp. "I tried to get the lieutenant to take two men with him, sir," said Butts, "but he just laughed—said there was no reason—he knew what he was about, and he might make important finds there," and that was the last they saw of him till the fight. Captain Prince had come along with his company, and then they all "hiked down the left bank," waded the south fork and went on till they hit the ladrones and found Lieutenant Walker in command at Balliwag Bend.

And the best or worst that Blake could make of it was that Walker had done a daring and foolhardy thing that enabled him to turn up, like the "Johnny-on-the-Spot" he claimed to be, just when he was most



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any moment a coasting steamer might drop in for the mails. At any moment he could charter a native sailing vessel and send his despatches to Dagupan by sea. Indeed it was high time he did so, and, in forwarding the report, he could not ignore those of Crabtree and Prince, so earnestly commending Walker's conduct. Moreover, he must lose no time in getting word to the Rays of the very serious condition in which Sandy lay. Even Scammon, most cheery of "medicine men" ordinarily, looked anxious every time he came away from his young patient's bedside, and he had been there thrice within the past twelve hours. Scammon was not like himself anyhow, said Blake, to his brave but sorely worried wife. He had "taken such a shine" to Ray at first—seemed so heartily to like him—was so sympathetic when he returned (ahead of Forrest's slow marching column) over the ill luck that had kept Sandy from taking part in that expedition. One of the frankest, most open-souled creatures in the world was Scammon, as Mrs. Blake was saying. You could almost tell what he was thinking even when it was of a patient in critical condition, and now, though most assiduous in professional attention to Sandy, he seemed averse to speaking of him—averse to any mention of his probable part in the recent exciting events down beyond Sulpicio. Blake could not make him out. Mrs. Blake, who overwhelmed him with questions about Gertrude, found him awkward, embarrassed, uncom-

municative, and it was impossible to account for it. She opened her heart to Mrs. Scammon and found her equally puzzled, and for similar reasons. What on earth had the doctor heard or discovered? What on earth could he be concealing?

Orders had been sent to Prince to push on again for Blunt's old camp and to take up his work where he had left it. Blunt was confident that a troop could ride right through to the railway, and the troop to go was already designated. Crabtree, gallant fellow, suffering from two serious wounds and weak from extreme loss of blood, would nevertheless be progressing favorably toward recovery, said the doctor, only—only he "seems to have something on his mind." It was marvelous how a man who had lost so much blood could find such a fever, but fever came and Crab babbled like a child in his broken, fitful sleep, sometimes even when awake.

Stopping in to see him on the way back to the office where Fethers was copying the rough draft of the report, Colonel Blake found Mrs. Scammon, with the hospital nurse at the captain's bedside, and as he entered she and the attendants were on their feet on opposite sides of the bed, with such a strange, scared, guilty look in their eyes as they gazed almost helplessly at each other.

At the instant of his entrance, Mrs. Scammon turned, saw who it was, and instantly, instinctively, sought to place her hand over the patient's mouth, for

Crab's eyes, heavy and suffused with fever, were yet lighted with some strange intelligence; his voice that had been feeble, had gained new power, and words, words uncontrollable, amazing, abominable words, were rolling from his lips, and Blake was brought up standing, fairly appalled by the first that reached his ears. Then with something like a wail of anguish, Mrs. Scammon quit the bedside and almost threw herself upon him.

"O, colonel, colonel!" she cried, "don't listen! Don't think of it! He's just stark, staring mad!"

Then Scammon himself came hurrying in, and between them, Blake was led away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHRISTMAS holidays had come and Crabtree was again afoot, clothed in his right mind and rejoicing in the soft and balmy seabreeze that blew across the shaded after deck of the Pittsburg, and straight, possibly, from Ceylon's isle. The spice thereof might have been absorbed in the leagues of salt that had been traversed, but no spice had been lacking in life at Boutelle in the month gone by. Crab, to be sure, knew little about it, though he had furnished much. Crab had been mad as a March hare, and in the course of his fevered ravings had said stupendous things. Crab had parted with a long cherished family secret concerning his past, had prattled for hours of being indeed a Paget on the distaff side, a younger son of a distinguished house, name not even here to be mentioned, since it was the mother's name he had taken, and taken not in vain, to the service of the United States. Crab had managed to reveal how disgrace and dishonor had followed on the heels of a forbidden marriage before he was twenty-one, a marriage that had wrecked him before he was twenty-two, the lady in the case then consistently flitting to France with an older and wealthier fool, and leav-

ing him free to begin life anew with nothing. Crab had babbled of days in the ranks of the Lancers in Hindostan, until recognized and brought out by the elder brother who loved and had faith in him. And even then, it seems, Crab wouldn't go home and take up the old name again. The gentle mother had died, the angering old father had measurably relented, but the young soldier had brought discredit to the race in wedding the lass against whom they had warned him, and never, said he, would he resume it until honor exceeding the disgrace had been won for it. Wherefore had he come to soldier in the United States, suffering long for a chance to do something, and getting it at last, and almost his quietus, in the bamboo brakes of "Balliwag." Time and again the men of even his own command had laughed at his methods and mimicked his mannerisms, but the man who dared it now would have been mobbed by his fellows, for from grizzled old Prosser down to Jerry Donovan, the "kid" of the company, they swore by him, bragged by the hour of "the old man's" grit and pluck after getting the first wound, still cheering and leading them on, handling a Krag instead of the sabre, bleeding "like a stuck pig" the while, and never giving up till the battle was over, his blood nearly gone, and a second shot had felled him. "Oh, yes, he's a Johnny Bull all right," said the men of Company "A," "but what have *you* fellows got to match him?" This to the home keeping gang of a

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time stayed not alone with the Moons in the big and spacious house. Blunt, too, with the imperturbable Hilarious, had gone by sea at the same time with the Blakes, and Blunt could not do enough to show the depth of his regard for Sandy Ray. Blunt had had a row with the uxorious yet excellent Lieutenant Shane, all on account of certain insinuations let fall from the rosy lips of "that most impertinent young person," Mrs. Shane, and his very blunt and Blunt-like response. Shane decided that apology was due.

"Apologize to Mrs. Shane!" said Blunt, when called upon by her subordinate liege. "No, sir! If ever I felt like seizing and shaking a woman it was Mrs. Shane that day, and by——, Tom Shane, if you don't get out of here, I'm damned if I don't shake *you!*"

But this episode, and others, Sandy Ray was permitted to hear nothing about until later. He wondered languidly, and without much caring, why it was that several men and two or three women seemed to hold aloof from the colonel's quarters when he was well enough to be up, and why there seemed to be constraint when it came to saying good-bye. He would have wondered more could he have seen those few people when, a week after the going of the Blakes, Blunt and Ray—all summoned to Manila—there came of a sudden the startling tidings that Lieutenant Walker had been arrested aboard the Esmeralda, in disguise and a locked cabin, just half

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to meet him. "Gertrude and her mother, at least, will never know want again."

"Old Uncle Thingumbob come to his senses?" asked the colonel, noting gladly the return of bloom to the soft cheek of his wife, and kissing the same, appreciatively.

"Yes, though Mrs. Dean insists on living with *him* at Shanghai."

"Never, never will desert Mr. Micawber, I suppose?"

"Her brother would have given her a home and—everything long ago, if she could only have cut loose from that—that impossible," said Aunt Nannie. Then with her eyes brimming: "And think what that might have meant for Gertrude!"

"More money than he knows what to do with, is it? What got it, Nan, Standard Oil or Life Insurance?"

"Mines, dear."

"Hum—ph. The earth, not the fools thereof, had to disgorge. I wish—Sandy—had the half of it."

"He might and—more," said Aunt Nan, with plaintive face, "if only——"

But the Deans were gone and the court was on the eve of meeting, and the prisoner at the bar was under guard at the barracks. Being a deserter, escaping in disguise through Dagupan, and down the railway, and well nigh off to the British possessions, the favor of mere arrest could not be accorded him. A sentry

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endorsed by Blunt, abstracted, raised to five hundred and tendered by Walker to a collector in Manila employed by certain firms in the United States. With it, in the hands of the judge advocate of the division, were two other checks for $250 each, purporting to be drawn by Sanford Ray in favor of Walker, checks that had been accepted by two different agents in Manila. Very neat and creditable forgeries they were, too, until examined by an expert paymaster. The forger had counted, probably, on escaping to Manila, cashing more checks and slipping across the China Sea before these were presented for payment to the bank in New York. Then there was the mess money poor Belden had had to make good. Who but Walker could have walked off with that? Even the missing fifty dollar bill was found again upon his person. Prince, too, was confirmation as to this. Beyond doubt, he said, the dread and agitation shown at first by Walker the morning Prince went in to accuse him, were due to his belief that he had been detected as the thief of the mess money. The discovery of Prince's real charge and purpose brought instant and overwhelming relief, and then insolence and assault. Then there were claims from defrauded people by the dozen wheresoever that ingenious young officer had landed. There was his swindling of poor, murdered Harry Dean and the exposure of the peculations the loving sister had periled so much to cover and conceal. "Then there was that bugle business

and the way he lied out of it," said Blunt. "That fellow could turn a tune, so it turns out, on half a dozen wind instruments besides his ugly mouth," and still all these did not fully account for Blunt's furious, vehement, passionate hate of the fallen man. Blunt swore there was no legal punishment that could begin to repay him for what he had done. Blunt was for tearing him away from the guard, tarring and feathering him in front of the Malate cathedral, riding him the length of the Calle Real on the sharpest kind of a rail and then dumping him into the dirtiest hole in the ditch of the walled city. "Boiling alive, like the lying lobster he is, ain't half bad enough for him!" said Blunt, and the more Ray protested at such vehemence the madder he got—so mad that one night at last it came—the pent up fury of an honest, sturdy soul against as black a villain as ever tore a good name to tatters.

"Why, damn you, Ray, for a mollycoddle," and Blunt's face went red as fire at his own words. "He told Crab and Scammon he found you and that sweet girl of Dean's—*faugh!* I can't foul even *my* blasphemous mouth with it!—when you were—hiding there by the river. He told them he could have put an end to you, if the niggers hadn't, for daring to—approach your colonel's wife—and have her in your quarters while he was away at Manila. He—for God's sake, man——" he broke off, suddenly, limp-

; after his light-footed comrade to the door. "Ray, ne back, for God's sake come back!"

But Sandy Ray, with blanched face and blazing s, had burst from the room, gone bounding down winding stone steps to the cobbled court beneath, l thence to the dimly lighted street beyond—gone, l his pistol with him!—gone, and the best his crip- d brother officer could do was gather up his stick l go hobbling after him, sending up a yell as he hted the sentry at the barrack gate—a yell for the poral of the guard.

* * * * * * * * *

The court met pursuant to orders on the following rning, but the case between the United States of ierica and the first prisoner to be tried had been nsferred to one of final—and eternal—jurisdic- n. What was left of Lieutenant Harrison Walker, merly Forty-Second Infantry, lay stiffening on a let at the old Second Reserve, and over at his tem- ary quarters in the Ermita suburb, barely two cks distant, Lieutenant Sanford Ray, with pallid, tching face, was nervously tramping the narrow its assigned him, with three or four sad-eyed, ipathetic comrades exchanging murmured com- nt and confidences at the door of the room to which had been ordered, a military prisoner in close est.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The glad new year came in accompanied by not a little ceremony, ecclesiastical as befitted the mother church, and military as befell our usually matter-of-fact establishment, because of the entrance of a new commander and the exit of the old. There was much parading of the priesthood and burning of incense at the venerable and numerous *edificios religiosos,* and as much parading of soldiery and burning of powder along the Luneta and the Santa Lucia. The big court-martial was given a recess, and a bigger sensation suffered something of eclipse, pending the expenditure of time and cartridges attendant upon the transfer of the command of the Military Division of the Philippines. But there had been a week during which the tragic fate of Hasty Walker was the talk of the town. The first story, spreading like wildfire, was that he had been shot dead by Sandy Ray. The second, gaining ground but slowly, was that he was not shot at all. The final and conclusive one, was the composite told by Lieutenant Harriott, —th Infantry, officer of the guard, Corporal Martin Conway, commanding second relief on duty at the Cuartel, and Private Jacobs, sentry on Number 7, to Lieu-

tenant Colonel Webster, commanding regiment and barracks, the following morning, and by him forwarded to the general commanding the Department of Luzon, who in turn, and still later, sent it up to Division Headquarters, where eventually it reached the eye of the incoming chief. Meanwhile, all manner of versions had been afloat—the one at first in general circulation being that Ray had rushed past the gate guard and up the steps, past the sentry at the room door, and, without an instant's wait or warning, had sent shot after shot through Walker's body as he lay helpless on his cot.

In view of the fact that the body, still warm and quivering, was picked up on the stone flagging at a point some seventy-five yards distant from the prisoner's room and nearly forty feet below it, this story should not have been published by representatives of the press, speedily at the spot, but it was by long odds the most sensational, which was all sufficient to set and keep it going until the second day thereafter, when in soldier circles, at least, the truth began to be known.

Harriott, officer of the guard, reported in writing as follows:

"I was at the guard room door inquiring as to the cause of some noise or altercation I thought I had heard, when Sergeant Burke came running in, excited. He said No. 1 reported that an officer, who seemed crazy or drunk, had just rushed in with a

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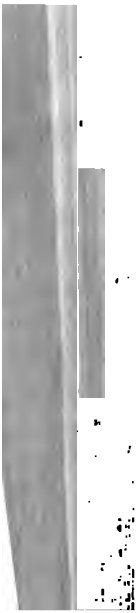
Colonel Webster, said, "I was near the gate when I heard a rush of some one running past behind me. The sentry looked dazed and troubled, said 'twas an officer ran by "with a gun in each fist," and I hurried after, calling, stop him. They did try opposite the guard room door, but he tore through them like he was playing football. That was the noise Lieutenant Harriott heard. At first I couldn't tell where he had gone till I heard shouting up stairs, then I ran, and when I got to the corridor everybody was running to the south end, and there was Lieutenant Ray trying to get to the window, and Sentry Jacobs a-hold of him and calling to me for help and to look out for Lieutenant Walker, who'd gone out of the window. Then Lieutenant Harriott came."

Then Jacobs told his tale. "I was on guard at Lieutenant Walker's door, had orders not to let him out, but none not to let other officers in. There had been two or three to see him. First thing I knew a lieutenant in white uniform came sprinting along the hall, one hand behind his back. He was blowing when he got there. Never said nothing at all, but just shoved right in. Lieutenant Walker was lying on his bed and jumped right up at sight of him. Then I saw the other lieutenant—Lieutenant Ray—had two pistols—revolvers, and was holding them out by the muzzles. 'Take yer choice,' he says; 'take your choice and take your stand, you damnable cur and liar! One of us has to drop right here!' And by



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the Calle Real, a block from the barracks, had seized the major's revolver and gone speeding away down the street. This, and the sentry's story, proved that even in his fury at Walker's villainous slanders, Ray never meant to shoot him, save in fair fight. But, however valiant Walker might have been in grapple with a man not half his brute strength, he had no stomach for a fight in which firearms would set them equal. One glimpse of the deadly purpose in Ray's blazing eyes had stricken him with terror. Flight was his sole impulse, until like hunted cat he had lost his grip on the perilous ledge without the window, and plunged headlong to the stony area below.

But long days before the tragic ending of Walker's career of recklessness and crime, Mrs. Blake had written to Gertrude Dean of the remarkable reports concerning the valor and value of that officer's services in the affair of Balaoag, and, brief hours before, had come her answer, and who needs now to be told what manner of missive that was? Blake, when he read it, could hardly contain himself with impatience and wrath. Blake was actually on the way to the walled city, late as it was at night, to find his friend, the adjutant general, when stopped by the crowd at the crossing of the Calzada de Herran and the tidings, as first told, that Lieutenant Walker was being borne to the hospital, shot to death by Sandy Ray. Indeed, even Blunt at first believed it, and Crabtree and Prince marveled not, nor greatly blamed; for, of all

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but would be silent. Shane, who differed with Blunt as to the extent of Walker's iniquities, had been stunned to temporary silence by the thunder of Blunt's revelations, but all who knew Shane *and* Mrs. Shane knew well that his silence would never withstand her cross-questioning. Crab held up his hands in piteous dismay at Blunt's confession. Every woman left at Boutelle, said he, would have the story in full by this time. Pray God Mrs. Blake may never hear of it! Pray God it may never reach Gertrude Dean! As to this Colonel Ray was less concerned, however, than his juniors. People will scorn the story, he said, even as by this time they must despise the monger. "It will die a natural death, which was more than *he* could." But, as Sandy recalled the strange words scrawled at the top of the page that fell accidentally under his eye at Blunt's quarters, and "Aunt Nannie's" instinctive shrinking from the man, and Gertrude Dean's utter horror of him, he had his doubts and was not altogether comforted.

However, there was no sense in borrowing trouble. The reunion that had begun in such anxiety, and progressed to such rejoicing, must speedily end. The Rays must hasten back to Zamboanga, the Blakes to Boutelle. There was to be a dinner by way of adieu to their old general, and a welcome to the new—a big affair to which no less than fifty officials and officers were bidden, and the resources of Manila had been ransacked to make it a gastronomic success. The

Club and the Club's brilliant manager would see to that. As for the speeches, they must look out for themselves. Much could be expected from the governor, but less from the commanding general, in that line. Four or five star-bearers, a dozen spread eagles and half a score of gold and silver leaves would grace the occasion, but very few, save aides-de-camp, among the junior officers might expect invitation. Crabtree and Prince, participants in the recent and stirring affairs with *ladrones,* had been duly honored, and Sandy was both delighted and surprised when he, too, received a card. Crab blushed and beamed with joy that his should bear the superscription Captain Almeric Paget Crabtree, especially as a famous British sailor, with a captain or two from his fleet, and a distinguished British writer and traveler were among the invited guests.

And the night of that dinner was long remembered in Manila. A glorious, starry, cloudless, breezeless night, with the bay all spangled from the skies above and brilliant with the illumination of the war ships. A famous Filipino orchestra played sweetly on the spacious gallery, alternating with the fine band of the artillery in the court below. Everything, said everybody, had gone off swimmingly. The healths of the President and of His Majesty, King Edward, had been drunk most loyally, and worthily responded to. The major general homeward bound had been heartily toasted and gratefully cheered. His successor

had been as hopefully honored, and both had said, as best they could, the things appropriate to the occasion, and then a well-worded toast to the navy had brought every soldier, civilian and foreigner to his feet, and a gallant rear admiral had blushingly acknowledged the compliment, and then another, equally solicitous, had evoked shouts and cheers as the glasses clinked across the board, and Britain's men-o'-wars men beamed their appreciation, and their admiral, having been drafted into service when the King was toasted, the captain of the Wonderful plunged valiantly into a troubled sea of sentences "hear, heared" vociferously by Crab and cheered by everybody. Then the civil service had its innings, well handled, despite the fact that the governor general had answered for the President, and might not, like Costigan of blessed memory, respond to more than one. By this time it was well toward midnight, and, the more formal section of the banquet being over, certain seniors and elders cannily withdrew, and a livelier toastmaster took the chair, and a certain few with the gift of thinking on their feet were called into action, and fun and merriment were flying fast, and all indeed going merry as a marriage bell, when it occurred to a certain elder present, hapless wight (there is always some inspired idiot at such an affair who conceives it his prerogative to teach the toastmaster his duties) to rise and, addressing the chair, beg leave to call attention to the fact that "We have with us to-night a most dis-

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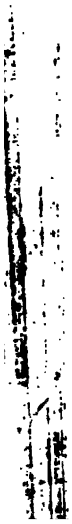
tialed and punished in deference to a shuddering public sentiment at home. It was bad enough to have to bear that from one's own press and people, but before the distinguished guest had been speaking four minutes it was found that he, too, was bent on touching on that almost forbidden topic, and a silence such as precedes the coming of the typhoon fell upon the board.

He took himself seriously, did our visitor. He had read and written far more than he had traveled. He came from a people who for ages had had colonies all over the globe, to a people who were making their first experiment, and therefore should welcome advice, suggestion, admonition, and he gave all three, ponderously regretting that, albeit in very few instances, our unaccustomed hands should have been betrayed into deeds of which Christendom and civilization, and he was grateful to observe the American people, had expressed their abhorrence. "But," he went on, more hurriedly, for even Crab's "Hear, hear" had been silenced, "let us not dwell on the few errors of the past. Let us rather turn with renewed and earnest purpose to the roseate promise of the future, for after all, are we not of the same blood, the same old sturdy root that has peopled the world with the sons of the dominant race, and carried Christianity and civilization to the utmost confines of the earth? Let us rejoice in our common heritage, and let me, in conclusion, at this gathering of the repre-



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sentiments of our genial and gifted friend who has so enlivened us. Underneath the mask of gravity, almost if not quite as sepulchral as that we know so well in the foremost of our own talkers—our soldier ambassador to France—our new-found friend has concealed a humor even more exquisite. He has launched one jest after another, even while pointing a moral and adorning a tale. And now, in the same broad spirit of comradeship and conviviality that animated his reference to our unschooled methods, let me admit without hesitation that those methods lack the comprehensiveness, the finish, I might say, of the system which blew into smithereens, from the mouth of the cannon, their own particular brand of insurrectos in the days of Bayard Outram and Havelock. Let us admit, too, that in dealing with the devil incarnate we have much to learn from our experienced kinsmen of Albion, and finally let me, in the same sportive and whimsical mood which inspired his tribute to three at least of our old-time leaders, bid you again to lift your glasses and then to drain them—those who are not still votaries of the water-cure—to the honor of the only three great generals Great Britain has evolved in a whole century of wars —Wellesley, Wolseley and 'Bobs'—God bless him!—yes, and we'll count in Kitchener, too; all four sprung from the green sod of Erin; all of them—Irish!"

And then went up a shout that shook the walls as

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

And to Sandy, who indeed needed it, the leave had come, with the recommendation of the medical director that he spend it in a sea voyage to Frisco and back, rather than a sojourn in the land of cherry blossoms and chrysanthemums—at other seasons of the year. Which was how he came to be aboard the big and good ship Sheridan, of our transport service, as she steamed into Nagasaki's deep, long and narrow, landlocked harbor, and how and why, with other returning warriors, he should be ashore a day or two while his bark was off the seas and in the dry dock. They made him welcome and gave him an airy dainty room at the big hotel, facing the crowded bay, and a seat at table that commanded a view of the entrance, and of those who entered. The consul had come to call upon the hero of the Paul-and-Virginia-like, and otherwise romantic, episode of the so-called Balliwag, and had planned a rickshaw run and a dinner at the Club. The quartermaster in charge had come to see him and talk of days at old Camp Sandy, Arizona, where he had served with Ray's father, with Jack Truscott and "Old Catnip" and Bucketts—days that young Sandy could never hear enough of.

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Not once in all those weeks, since last he saw her in the dim light of their leafy refuge that day of the "Balliwag," had he exchanged look or word with Gertrude Dean, save in the way of messages such as Aunt Nannie could transmit. To his father, after Blunt's startling revelation, he had spoken of her earnestly and much, and in a way that set the elder soldier to serious thinking. To his mother he had spoken of her hardly at all, the first essay meeting with a silence, or a lack of response, or sympathy, or something that both troubled and repelled him. The story of his adventure was known, of course, all over the islands now, and never could Mrs. Ray hear allusion to it without wincing, as Mrs. Blake was quick to see and then to strive to correct. Whatever the record of the father, and the fault of the brother, and the weakness of the mother, that girl, in Aunt Nan's fond and loyal eyes, stood without a stain, no matter what Paloma had confessed to doing (though Paloma's confession to her young mistress had been as yet by no means as complete as had been Gertrude's compassion and forgiveness—as complete as, in time, had been Aunt Nannie's, despite the doped coffee and deft peculations). Yet Mrs. Blake, with all her love for Gertrude Dean, was still worldly wise enough to know that neither Colonel Ray nor Marion, his wife and her oldest and stanchest friend, could by any human possibility be expected to welcome the idea of Sandy's having fallen in love with a girl of such unfortunate

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opinion. Nannie Blake w
Ray gave to it too much he
and now here came a crow
clash had there occurred,
year would either admit or

"It is easy for a girl to f
Nan "

asked Mrs. Marion, with averted eyes and acidulous tongue.

"As *she* did, and as *I* did, Marion, when it was to save a father! This girl not only suffered to save her father's name, and her brother's; she suffered in saving your boy's life."

"No more than he did, first, in saving hers. Just see him now!"

The implied reproach was hard to bear, but the superior will showed in the self-control of the final words:

"You would have sent him, yourself, as I did, Marion, had you been there." Wisely, then, the last speaker left the room, and dropped the subject; argument with angering woman, even a sister, being worse than useless.

Not a word of this, of course, had come to Sandy Ray, but he knew and read his mother, even as he loved her, and her silence as to Gertrude Dean was more than significant. It told him the topic could be no more unwelcome than the girl. He had written three letters to Gertrude, before that startling interview with Blunt, and had torn each to fragments as utterly inadequate. Letter writing was not his forte, he ruefully said, and now as he sat here, solus, on the breezy gallery, he was wondering if he could not do better, and send it with some pretty trifle from Nagasaki's alluring shops, and find perhaps an an-

...ner had come
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shore. The evening air
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forth upon the street. Tl
ladies in black and wearing
ing up from the landing, th
hand luggage and the like.
eagerly eyeing Sandy, hop
was speedily jogged away to
fascinating city.

Two hours later, one of t
ing room, he was at his seat
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few of them look half as
white shirt front and black
ception. But both he and ar
larly ...

when he became suddenly aware of the fact that Ray had neither eyes nor ears for him and, following the astonished gaze in the latter's eyes, the speaker turned to the doorway. The manager himself was escorting two ladies to their seats, one of them a sad-faced gentlewoman, obviously the mother of the tall, slender and beautiful girl who followed; one in the widow's cap, both in deep mourning. A moment more and Sandy Ray had sprung from his chair, hastened half way across the broad and airy room and was bending over them—his eyes beaming. The elder looked up startled. The younger gave one quick glance. A wave of beautiful color swept to her forehead, then seemed to slowly fade from temple, cheek and even the parted lips. Her hand, mechanically, had gone out to meet his, but was withdrawn and dropped. The sudden, unexpected meeting that had begun in such evident emotion on part of all three, seemed closing in constraint. A few words, that seemed to grow formal, were spoken by the elder woman, the girl listening with white, averted face. Ray stood one moment in stupefaction, then bowed stiffly, turned and came back to his place, but neither ate, drank nor talked. Lamely excusing himself he presently arose, left the table and the room.

That evening he sent his card to the ladies, Rooms 41-43, and the answer came that both were indisposed and about retiring. Next morning there were two

letters at his plate. A mail had come up from Manila forty-eight hours after the Sheridan. One was postmarked Dagupan, addressed Lieutenant Sanford Ray, —d Cavalry, Care Division of the Philippines, Manila. It had been re-addressed "U. S. Transport Sheridan, Nagasaki." He tore it open and found it came from Prince, written from camp on Benguet Road. It had lots to say about Walker, more evidence direct, against him, and the relief they all felt in his self-ended career. It told of Walker's connection with the smugglers, and their allies, the ladrones. "They would have killed him sooner or later for his double-faced treachery." But Ray hardly read, for, on the fourth closely written page, he had seen *her* name and eagerly skipped to that; and there were these words underscored:

"So I hope to God you never gave, and she never saw, the little packet I sent by you!"

Little packet? Why, of course! Ray recalled it well. He had taken it on the sail to Bató, meaning to give it that night. But whatever became of it? More than half of his few belongings he had never seen or heard of since the moment he had been felled there in the darkness. But why should Prince so hope and pray that Gertrude Dean had never seen it? He found the reason soon enough, and left his breakfast untouched:

"After hearing the full story of how that brave girl made her escape, taking you with her and sav-

ing your life, I could kick myself, were it anatomically possible, for the brutal letter I wrote her in sending back what I then thought was evidence of her intimacy with—him—at Boutelle." (Sandy's cheeks were burning now, though but a moment earlier they were so pale.) "Of course at that time I had no real knowledge of affairs at Sulpicio—her father's and Harry's—and never dreamed that it was for their names' sake she so risked her own. And when I found that she had actually been there to his quarters—found her little foot tracks in the sand, and that filmy little handkerchief at the very doorstep, I wrote the fool letter that was enclosed in the packet—told her that a girl like her had no right to the trust and the sanctuary of a woman like Mrs. Blake, and the sooner she took herself away from the post——" But Sandy could read no more. With a barely stifled cry of wrath and misery, he sprang to his feet, ran up to his room and hurled the offending missive against the wall.

The consul came to take him a day's pleasuring across the beautiful hills, and he amazed that official by begging off. Friends had come, he said, whom he must see—friends, as he knew by that time who refused to see him. Mrs. Dean had almost said so in response to the penciled words upon his card. They were breakfasting in their room and begged to be excused. It must be that that miserable packet had found its way to her while she was nursing Paloma

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Then Sandy thanked
dan there must come o
and until nine o'clock
though neither mother
Then came

something queer about it—Mrs. Dean sends the word they've decided to stop over."

"Then, by the Lord," said Sandy, "so have I!"

And that was the news that went back to Zamboanga and Boutelle.

* * * * * * * * * *

But it was by no means all, for the Blakes, at least, had received advices from Shanghai that measurably prepared them. Other letters, later letters, had come from Gertrude, full of affection for Aunt Nannie and of anxiety for her father. He had never really rallied from the prostration at Boutelle. His trouble had been aggravated by bodily exposure and mental distress. He had been all too easily led into evil courses, both at Manila and Sulpicio, through blindly trusting subordinates, he said, who had been thrust upon him by superiors. "He had hoped and expected to meet the revenue officers and to put them in possession of all the facts in the case." Possibly this became known to his confederates and was the real cause of the sudden, if temporary, wealth that enabled him to flit expensively to refuge in Chinese territory, and then to send for his family. Once there, however, his friends and funds both began to fail him, and his strength to follow suit. Dean was a doomed man when he set foot in Shanghai, and all the devoted nursing of his wife and daughter could not save him. In their extremity the long alienated brother had come to their aid. Then Dean slipped peacefully

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A contrast to this i
letter was Mrs. Dean's

ance of the trifles she had ordered sent from Nagasaki (they were still in the custom house at Manila at last accounts, held up by a ruinously prohibitive tariff) which souvenirs she trusted would serve sometimes to assure Mrs. Blake of her own and her daughter's appreciation of Mrs. Blake's hospitality in their hour of distress. Mrs. Dean wished most properly that she could feel for every one at Camp Boutelle the sentiments expressed toward Mrs. Blake, but this unfortunately could never be. The utterly unjust attitude, assumed by so many officers toward her beloved and misjudged husband, "now, alas, at last gone to his reward" ("Gertrude never saw *this* letter," says Madam Nan, with heightened color, to her chuckling liege) precluded the possibility of her forgiveness. There was very much on this head and in this strain which need not be enumerated. But then came the paragraph at which Mistress Blake gasped in dismay; then turned in amaze upon her husband.

"And if that were not more than enough, the insult conveyed to my innocent child, who periled her life to save that of your especial protégé among the officers—the vile insinuation in the note sent by Mr. Prince, with her handkerchief and scarf, has capped the climax. That Mr. Ray should have taken upon himself the duty of conveying it to her was proved by its being found in his bag at Bató, and I thank heaven they brought it to me and not to her. Of

the nature of its contents I have felt it my duty to acquaint her, and the shock she sustained is something I wish she might have been spared." (How many another do we not know, equally pious and rejoicing in rectitude, who so wishes the loved one might be spared this or that undeserved pang, yet cannot deny her or himself the mournful luxury of inflicting it.) "It will be years," continued Mrs. Dean, "before she even partially recovers."

"The—the—oh, my Aunt Maria's tabby cat!" wailed the colonel. "Go on, Nan!"

"Go on!" cried Mrs. Nan, her cheeks ablaze. "What on earth did Prince write and Ray carry?" And, when she was told, an hour was given over to wrath, then three hours, and whole sheets of paper, to letter writing. The missive that went to Gertrude that night by way of Dagupan, Manila and the care of Colonel Skinner, U. S. Quartermaster, Nagasaki, was what Blake called a hummer, and it got there just in time.

The Sheridan slipped away in the mists of early morning, minus one of the original passenger list and two of the supplementary. Sandy Ray had slept but little that night. Letters had been brought in late; some taken upstairs, some few handed to him. His luggage had come off at eleven and been sent to his room. He had written a page or two, tried bath and bed, but was up, restless and troubled, at four in the morning, and out on the sea wall in the dim light of

dawn. He watched the big white steamer, with the electrics still sparkling, as she swung her head slowly to the south, and bored silently through the flotilla at anchor; then hied him within doors and up to the second floor and out on the broad veranda for one final peep.

And there at the farther corner, all alone, leaning against the pillar and only dimly visible, stood a slender form he knew at a glance. One moment he halted, uncertain, then up and back went the curly dark head, and on tiptoe again, half ashamed, all determined, he bore swiftly down upon her and found her sobbing her heart out, her streaming eyes fixed on that fast-fading transport. Then, when with a low cry she whirled upon him at sound of her name, his arms barred her escape. He would neither stand aside nor let her go, nor, for the moment, let her speak. He held the floor—and Gertrude—and he felt his strength returning.

And he needed it, for Gertrude Dean was no weakling, mental or physical. He realized *that* the day the shots came crashing through their shelter on the Balaoag, and she laid her white hands on his shoulder and bore him down. Now she braced both those slender hands against his shoulders, thrusting herself far as possible from his bounding heart, with her head thrown back and her eyes jetting blue blazes at him—the sweet, soft eyes whose fires but the moment before seemed drowned in the flood of their own

"ay until I caught you

"I thought you were g

"I *know* you did! an
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"Oh! Of all the infam
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"I don't. You're hurt
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and futile. In the vernac
and had once excelled in, al
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was no referee on the spot
ing in the line. Finding i
hold, she fell back for a par

"If I promise to listen—
let go?"

"For two minutes, yes."
yielded.

"I'm—listening," she pan
lips parted now, her white te

"Now, listen," she began again, presently. "I don't want you to tell me—what you were going to."

"You've known it—all along."

"I *haven't!* But, we're not at all—suited to each other."

"Speak for yourself, please," he began, confidently, then finished half ruefully, "I know I'm—a runt." Indeed, her bonny head was held at the moment almost on a plane with his own. What was medium height for a trooper was tall for a girl.

"It isn't that—at all," she said, promptly, so earnest in her argument she forgot about the arm, or possibly it was only he. "Honestly though," and then the fires were but smouldering again, and speedily the eyes were once more welling over. "It would never do. I know your father and mother."

"I know—*yours,*" blundered Sandy, "and if——"

But the next was drowned in an impetuous rush, and indignant burst of tears. Breaking away from him she ran to the long Venetian window opening upon the gallery, and beyond that he could not pursue.

Not until the day of the Doric's sailing did he see her again, and then only for a moment, against her prohibition, yet when she read the woe in his face and the havoc the week had played, her brave heart melted and—I don't know just what happened. In six days Sandy Ray was back in Manila, waiting transport for Zamboangua. In six weeks he was back

quite as convincing, addre:
Ray, to Mrs. Amos Dean a
Even then something must
April the society columns
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Gerard Stuyvesant of New
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ing, which precluded the pos
ing much in public." What
have been supplied in letter
for at least one very soft

shamelessly by and applauding the performance. "Aunt Nan—Aunt Nan!" the young trooper was declaring, "I could never have won her—but for you!"

THE END.

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Forgotten HEROES

By

ELMO SCOTT WATSON

Saved From Apache Tortures

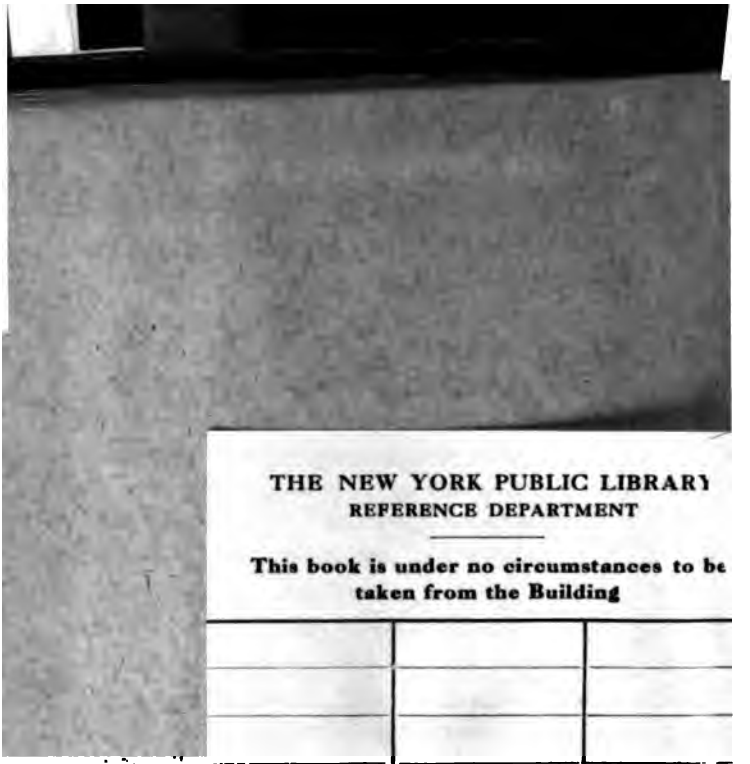
HAD it not been for the fearless devotion of one of those typical old army sergeants, the career of a distinguished cavalryman and Indian fighter might have been ended at the outset and American literature might never have been enriched by the stirring romances of the old army days in the West which came from his pen. For Gen. Charles King, at the age of eighty-seven one of the few remaining links today between the present and the past when there was a frontier, owes his life to Sergeant Bernard Taylor of the "Fighting Fifth" cavalry.

In 1874, King, then a lieutenant, with a small detachment of the Fifth, was pursuing a band of Apache raiders in the Mogollon mountains of Arizona. Near Sunset pass King, accompanied by Sergeant Taylor, scouting ahead of the detachment, uncovered the ambush which the Indians had laid for the soldiers. The first sign of the presence of the enemy was an arrow which whizzed past his head and buried itself deep into a tree. A moment later he felt a burning sensation as another dart tore through the outer corner of his left eye.

Jumping quickly behind a rock, King waited for the enemy to show themselves and as two dusky forms glided into the open a quick shot from his carbine brought one of them down. Before he could reload a volley from the other warriors spattered on the rock. A bullet pierced his right arm and his carbine dropped from his hand. Realizing instantly that the savages would be upon him before the detachment could come up, King sprang to his feet and started to dash down the slope. But a tough clinging vine tripped him up and a head-long plunge of ten feet left him lying bruised and almost senseless among the rocks. As he fumbled for his revolver, for he was resolved not to let them take him alive, he heard a voice calling "Lieutenant! Where are ye?"

"Here, Sergeant," replied the wounded officer, and a second later Taylor was at his side, had lifted him in his arms and started down the slope. When King fell, the Apaches lost his trail for a few moments but they caught sight of him again as Taylor reached him. Now began a thrilling race for life with the savages gaining on the sergeant with his heavy load. Every few yards he stopped to send a shot from his carbine to delay his pursuers and twice an Apache dropped in his tracks. Taylor was tiring fast and King begged the sergeant to drop him and save his own life. But the sergeant knew what that would mean for the young lieutenant. He staggered on and just as he was about to collapse he heard the welcome sound of the other soldiers crashing through the bushes. They were saved.

* * *



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